"Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give thee thy wages."
—Exodus 2:9

This text may not sound very exciting. Yet it would have been front-page news even in that distant day. It would cover the whole page today. That which would have made front-page news is the fact that is has to do with a princess. One of the characters in this drama is the daughter of a king. But that which makes it far more important is that it has to do with a baby. This scene, of which a baby is the center, is one of the big scenes of human history. It would be next to impossible to over-estimate its importance. I doubt if a single battle in the history of the world ever amounted to so much. I doubt if any battle was ever fought that did so much to make history as this seemingly homely transaction on the banks of the Nile.

I

Look at the background. The Hebrew people had been scourged into Egypt by hunger. There they had been made welcome by a famous kinsman named Joseph. For a while they prospered. All went well. The people multiplied. Then "a king arose who knew not Joseph." The proud Egyptians put the foreign people into slavery. Fearing that by multiplying too fast, they would soon become superior in numbers and thus be able to throw off the yoke of their conquerors, they ordered all boy babies exposed. When, therefore, the hero of this story was born, he was born an outlaw. His crime was the crime of being weak. When his mother heard his cry and saw his baby tears, she wept with him. She knew he was under sentence of death.
But though she and her family were slaves in a totalitarian state, though they seemed so utterly helpless, she simply could not give this baby up. She had a firm conviction that God's hand was in his birth, that he was God's child, and that God had a purpose in his life. Therefore, she with her husband took a basket and lined it with pitch and prayer. Then they put the baby in it and set the queer little vessel to float among the rushes on the waters of the Nile. The baby's sister, an unusually brilliant girl of some twelve years of age, was given the task of watching this priceless cargo.

Why did these ancient parents take such a risk? The reason given is so human and so lovely that we smile over it to this day. Listen: "By faith Moses when he was born was hidden three months of his parents because they saw that he was a proper child." That is the reason. They hid him because he was so beautiful. "They saw that he was a proper child"—literally translated, "a citified child". He was no clodhopper, no mere rustic. He was an aristocrat, a patrician, to the manor born. In that he was just like your baby and mine—a proper child. So at the risk of their own lives, they hid him. Then one fateful day, Miriam as she watched saw something that drained the blood from her face. A group of women were making their way toward the river Nile. Worse still, they were headed toward the exact spot where this strange vessel was at anchor. What was worst of all, the group was made up of the Princess with her ladies in waiting. They were going to the Nile for a swim and, as ill-fortune would have it, they came to where this queer vessel was afloat. Someone saw it at once. They could hardly help doing so because the little chap was crying at just the wrong time, as babies have a way of doing.

When one of them towed the vessel to the shore and uncovered it, the queer ship became a man of war. The one passenger began to cannonade the Princess with his beauty. He torpedoed her with his tears. He put on a veritable blitzkrieg of loveliness until by and by this woman, who had a genuine mother
heart, surrendered and took the little waif to her arms. I think I can hear her talking bad Egyptian grammar to him. Everybody that amounts to anything talks bad grammar to a baby.

Miriam, who was watching this scene, was quick to understand. She knew that her brother had nothing to fear from that woman of the tender face. So she darted out from her hiding place, hurried down to the Princess, bowed low, and asked this royal personage if she would like a nurse for the baby. The Princess, seeing how very bright and understanding was the child, readily consented. Then off went this wonderful girl to tell her mother the amazing news. A moment later the Princess was handing the child over to this Hebrew slave, saying with becoming haughtiness, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

II

Now if you will notice, this Princess made three decisions in regard to Moses that were of vast importance.

1. She decided that this baby was to live. Her father had passed death sentence upon him, but she brushed that sentence aside. That in itself was a tremendous decision. This was the case because this was no ordinary baby. This little bundle of life has in him the making of a genius. He is destined to become about the greatest lawgiver the world has ever known. He is to put his hands upon every continent of the world, to push into new zones of light. It was a great day, therefore, when the Princess decided to spare this baby's life.

2. A second wise decision that she made was that she would not take upon herself the task of mothering her adopted son. Had she done so, the Moses that we know would never have lived. Had she done so, he might have become the greatest Pharaoh that Egypt ever had. But he would not have become the
prophet and lawgiver that did so much to shape the life of his people and of the whole world. Had she taken his training upon herself, he would doubtless have grown up in the religion of Isis and Osiris. When he stood at the forks of the road, he would doubtless have taken the turn that she desired him to take instead of that pointed out to him by his real mother.

But if she missed shaping his character by refusing to undertake his training, her decision to adopt him was not without its benefits. It guaranteed to Moses the best educational opportunities of that day. It gave him the right to move in the atmosphere of royalty. It gave him the privileges of training with the best scholars of his day. Moses is the outstanding man of the Old Testament. He is perhaps the best trained man in the Old Testament. Luke says of him that he was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and of the Greeks and he was mighty in deed and in word. This he owed to his foster mother.

3. But the decision of supreme importance made by this Egyptian was that not only should Moses live, not only should he be adopted into the royal family, but that he should be turned over to his own mother for the shaping of his young and tender years. It was this choice I am sure that did more to determine the future character and the future destiny of Moses than anything else. All these decisions were important. All these decisions were rich in blessing for Moses and for the world. But this latter was supremely so.

III

Why was this the case? Let it be said at once that it was not the case simply because this slave woman was Moses' mother. This is Mother's Day. We come together wearing many of us, red carnations for the living and white carnations for the dead. It is easy to be sentimental on Mother's Day. Sometimes we grow positively maudlin. We speak of mothers as if all of them were
heroic. We sometimes go on the easy and foolish assumption that the very act of giving birth to a child will make any sort of a woman into a madonna. Of course, this is not the case at all. No woman is necessarily a saint just because she is a mother.

Motherhood at its best is the most beautiful, the most sacrificial, the most Christlike something that we know, but there are mothers that have none of these fine qualities. There are some who in spite of the high responsibilities of motherhood are chaffy, silly, and selfish. There are some who are and remain giddy, gossiping, gad-about. There are some who do not think enough of their children to keep themselves physically fit. Somehow I can never have any great hope for a better generation nursed in the arms of liquor-sipping, cigarette-smoking mothers.

Then there are mothers who bring children into the world only to neglect them. This Princess said to the nurse, "Take this child away and nurse him for me." But the child was never really hers. The only way to make a child or to make anybody else really ours is through our self-giving. We cannot do it through neglect. There is nothing that will take the place of the giving of ourselves. The mother who is too busy to give herself to her children is not a good mother however fine and rewarding the task to which she gives herself on the outside. This choice then was not wise simply because this slave woman was Moses' mother. It was wise because of the kind of mother she was. What kind of mother was she?

1. She was an eager mother. When Miriam came running to her with the startling news that the baby had been found, her world collapsed. But when she added, "Even if they have found him, they are not going to kill him. The Princess told me to get a nurse and I came to get you. You can have him back again!" — did she not say, "What did you do that for? Didn't you know that this was my day at the Club?" No, she did not say that. She rather said, "Bless the
Lord, oh my soul!" And when that baby was put back into her arms that was the signal for the bursting of sunrise on the morning hills of her heart.

She believed that, in mothering her own child, she had a vocation big enough and roomy enough for the greatest of women. In fact, she believed that she had the supreme vocation. Of course, she lived a long time ago. In her day there was only one vocation open to women and that was the vocation of wifehood and motherhood. We have come upon better days. I am thankful to say that roadways lead today directly from a woman's door to almost every vocation in which men are entered. Yet I am still old-fashioned enough to believe that the vocation of this ancient slave woman was about the highest possible, and that the woman who deliberately turns from it is likely to abdicate her supreme throne and to stop her ears to the secret of highest blessedness. She was an eager mother.

2. The decision was wise because she was a woman of deep religious faith. That too is of vast importance. There are few things that mean so much to the life of a child as a sense of security. There is perhaps nothing that goes so far toward giving this sense of security as a vital faith on the part of parents. Experiments show that those children who have parents who go to church, who are religious, have a higher personality rating than the children of parents who are not. She was a woman of a vital religious faith.

3. The choice was wise because she was a wise woman. Knowing that her son had been adopted into the royal family, knowing that he would soon go from her into the white lights that played about a throne, she realized that what she did, toward shaping his character, she must do quickly. Soon other influences of tremendous power would enter into his life. Soon other voices of vast appeal would call to him, but for a little while he would be shut in with her. She was sure that in this brief time she could so touch him with her own faith that to that faith he would be true forever.
Many years have gone by since then. More has been written on child psychology during the last few years than in all the subsequent centuries; yet many of us have still not caught up to this ancient mother. We rather share the conviction of the Princess that we can make the child ours when he has come to young manhood and is more interesting. But the psychologists tell us that the child gets his idea of God, he gets his sense of values, by the time he is seven years of age. What, therefore, we do for our children, we must do in their young and tender years.

I think perhaps more tragic blunders are made here in the dealing with our children than anywhere else. A preacher told me sometime ago of his visit to a certain home. As he with the family was taking his place about the dinner-table that evening, there came from out the dark a keen cat-call whistle. Immediately the son, a boy of some seventeen, pushed his chair back from the table and left his dinner untasted. His mother gripped his arm for an instant as he went away, begging him to stay and eat, but he shook her off and hurried away. When he was gone, in spite of the presence of company, she burst into tears saying, "They have got my boy." But she had waited too long.

Moses' mother knew better. I hear her talking to him in the twilight. She is telling him the story of his own life, of how when the sword was suspended above his head she and his father had dared to try to save him. She told him how God had helped them through it all. "Now," she said, "when you are grown and are gone away to the King's Court, you will not forget." And he said, "I will not forget." Thus, she shot the deathless passion of her eyes into him and made him hers. She laid her mind upon him and he believed in it.

IV

And what was her reward? How much money she got out of it we do not know. But her reward in the values that count was rich beyond words.
1. She had the reward of greatly giving. That in itself made her a more joyous and lovely woman. Blessed are those that are privileged to give sacrificially! There stood by the cross of Jesus Mary His mother. Motherhood at its best has always stood beside the Cross. That is the reason it wears earth's supremest crown.

2. She had the reward of success. "By faith Moses when he was born was hid three months of his parents." That was the faith of his father and mother. "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." That was his own faith. It was a faith that he had learned at the lips of his mother. It was above all a faith that he had caught in the sacred atmosphere of the home.

The might of that faith can be seen in the high choice to which it led him. "By faith Moses when he was come to years refused, choosing." What did he refuse? He refused the treasures of Egypt. He refused the power of the mightiest nation in the world. He refused the soft position that goes with royalty. He refused the plans of his foster mother. I am sure that cost him much. He owed this adopted mother a great deal. It must have been hard for him to disappoint her. It cost him the turning aside from every inviting worldly ambition to cast in his lot with a horde of slaves. It cost him the facing of a thousand disappointments and a thousand struggles as he sought to make a horde of slaves into a nation. But we read, "He endured as seeing Him Who is invisible." The faith that he had drawn in with the very breath of life made him strong to the end.

This mother had the joy of success. But it was not until she reached life's other side that she realized how vastly successful she was. Not only did she give to the world a stalwart and saintly man; through him she gave to the world a new nation, a nation that has been above all other nations the teacher of
religion. When she was faithful to her task, she made possible not only Moses but Isaiah and Jeremiah. She made possible the apostles, the saintly John, and the great Paul. She even in a profound sense made possible Jesus Christ, our Lord. There is no measuring the power for good of one consecrated mother.

And let me say in conclusion that the fact that Moses came to embrace his mother's faith was no accident. It was the logical outcome of his training. Of course, Moses made some response, even as you and I must respond to our training. Our mothers can give us our bent, but we must cooperate. Otherwise their teaching and their prayers may become in vain. So if she is with you today in the vigor of her womanhood, appreciate her by making that response. Remember, she is perhaps the best friend you will ever have.

If she is with you no longer in the vigor of womanhood, but is a faded old grandmother, be patient with her. Don't push her armchair into a corner. Smooth the way for the old feet. They have taken many a step for you. Go home and kiss the old lips. They have grown tender, murmuring prayers for you. Be gentle with her, and by and by when she lies asleep, you will go there to find something blooming sweeter than spring violets and fairer than the lilies-of-the-valley. It will be a mother who can bless you in her home-going. "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give thee thy wages." You can pay those wages in part by helping to fulfill the dearest dream that your mother ever had for you—that of being a good man or a good woman.
"Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

-- Exodus 2:9

Here is a scene from which we are separated by seas and centuries and continents. It is a seemingly insignificant transaction that took place on the banks of the Nile nearly thirty centuries ago. Yet its influence is felt by every single soul of us at this hour. It is printed upon all the nations like a Gulf stream. It is an event so tremendous that it is next to impossible to over-state its importance. It has put its hands upon all the nations and pushed them into new zones of life. Yet it all centers around one teeny baby.

Look at the picture. A little girl is hidden among the rushes that grow along the banks of the river. She is acting as nurse. Her charge is a queer little boat that is securely anchored in the waters of the Nile. What a queer place to cradle a baby! But this baby is an outlaw. When he was born just three months ago, sentence of death was pronounced against him. This, of course, was the case, not because of any crime that he had done, but because he was the child of a foreigner. He was the son of the weaker race. To be so born has proved a crime countless millions of times since then. When his mother heard his first cry, she cried with him. The fact that he was under sentence of death went far to rob her of the natural joy that would have been hers had he been born under happier circumstances. But as it was there was no hope.
No, it was not quite as bad as that. She went home in spite of the desperateness of the situation. She, with her husband, decided upon a mad adventure. They would brave the wrath of the king. They would endanger their own heads. They would save the child at any cost. Therefore, they took the little basket and lined it with pitch and prayer and hid him away. And the reason given for it is such a naive and simple reason, "They saw that he was a proper child." A good many parents have made that discovery about their baby since then.

You made it about yours. I made it about mine. He was a child of surpassing beauty. Satisfied, one scholar translates the word, he was no crude, me cloghopper. He brought an atmosphere of culture with him. An enthusiastic mother said recently that her baby of two weeks had a sense of humor, which probably indicated that the mother had not.

So, this condemned baby was hidden out in the day and brought home in the night. But their shrewd scheme succeeded for only a few months. Then one day little Miriam saw something that drained the color from her face and made her eyes sparkle with terror. She saw a couple of women coming straight toward where the baby's little vessel was anchored. Nearer, she discovered that they were Egyptian women. It was none other than the princess herself with her ladies-in-waiting. They were coming for a swim in the Nile. "Look," one cried eagerly, "at the queer little vessel." At once it is towed to land, and that vessel becomes a battleship and the crew lays siege to the heart of the princess. He pelts her with his beauty and cannonades her with his winsome weaknens. At last Miriam sees her stretch her arms to him, and the little fellow is taken in and nestles to her heart. And this princess talks sweet and
and foolish baby talk to him, just as mothers have through the centuries. At that, she is sure that her little brother is safe. So she makes a daring adventure. Hurrying from her hiding place she bows before the princess and says: "May I secure a nurse for your baby?" And the princess says: "You may."

They she hurries away on winged feet to tell her mother, "They have found the baby", she pants, all tense with excitement. "But they are not going to kill him. The princess has taken him for her own, and she wants somebody to be his nurse, and I came for you." "What did you do that for?" the mother answered, half angrily. "Didn't you know that I was going out?" No, she didn't say that. She rather says: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name," and hurries to where the princess holds her baby in her royal arms. Arrived, this princess hands the baby over into the arms of his mother, with this haughty command: "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

I

Now, this princess made a twofold decision here. That is very important. You are indebted to her. First, she decided that this baby was to live. That was an important decision for he was no ordinary child. He had in him the making of a genius, and it was a big day for the world when this princess decided to give him a chance to live.

She made a yet more important decision. She decided not only that he was to live, but she decided as to the quality of his life. She decided as to the mind of man he was to be. This, she did all unwittingly, when she chose his nurse. If she had chosen an Egyptian nurse, the Moses we know would never have existed. The destiny of Moses was decided then by this Egyptian
princess when she chose Moses's own mother to become his nurse. I think the guiding hand of God was in it. It was a most wise choice. It was such a wise choice.

II

Wherein was this choice wise? It was not wise simply because this slave woman happened to be the mother of Moses. This is Mother's Day. We are met together wearing red carnations for the living and white carnations for the dead. We think tenderly of the mothers that are yet with us, and we are haunted by the precious memories of those that are passed on. We have a great tendency to rank all mothers as saints, just as we have a tendency to laugh all fathers out of court. But what we need to bear in mind is that a woman does not necessarily become a Madonna just because she holds a baby in her arms. Motherhood, at its best, is about the most beautiful something in all the world. But there are different kinds of mothers. There are some that in spite of all the beautiful things we may say and think about them remain selfish and cheap and neglectful. The greatest blessing that could come to some babies would be to be taken out of their mother's arms. They would fare far better in institutions. This decision was wise because of the kind of woman that Moses' mother was.

Now, what kind of woman was she? What was it about her that enabled her to become a channel of such unmeasured blessing to the world?

1. She was a woman of faith. This sounds commonplace, I know. As it is used, it often is commonplace. But it is not so in the case of the mother of Moses. I put it first because it comes first in the record. I put it first because it is the biggest fact in her life. "By faith" I do not mean that she
simply recited a creed. I don't mean simply that she was a member of the Church. I mean rather that she had a compelling, vital, empowering sense of God. She lived in a hard situation. She was a slave. Her people were slaves. There seemed no hope of the dawn of a tomorrow. But she lived in the midst of that black darkness with a great light in her soul, and a courage that nothing could daunt because of her faith in God.

But for this fact I am sure that Moses would never have become what he did become. I know she had other fine qualities but this was the one of fundamental importance. I am sure, too, that there is no need so compelling as this need for the mothers and fathers of today. This is becoming the conviction increasingly, not only of church people, but all those outside the church. There is nothing that can mean more in the life of a child than to be trained by such a mother. There is no sadder loss that can come to a child than to grow up in a home where nobody prays, where there is no window that looks out into the eternal, where there is no sense of God. A child born in such a home is robbed of his spiritual birthright.

2. Then, this mother was a mother. She believed in the worthfulness of her task. The mother of today ought to believe in it with a far greater intelligence because she should have a far deeper appreciation of the supreme worth of the child. Jesus is come since then to set the child in the midst, to show us that he is the creature of supreme importance. In fact we know today that civilization moves forward largely as it moves forward on the feet of little children. It is the mother, therefore, that is engaged in the greatest of all undertakings. She alone shapes the world. All others of us get there too late. We thank God for those noble women that give themselves in other fields of
endeavor. For, the woman who deliberately turns away from this high service abdicates her supremest throne, and stops her ears to the dearest secret of human blessedness.

3. This slave woman was a wise mother. She knew that what she did for her laddie, she must do quickly. Soon, he would be taken away from her. Soon, Pharaoh's daughter would claim him. Soon, he must go to live in the enervating atmosphere of a royal palace. Soon, he must go to be taught by the great masters of Egypt, because he was to be learned in all the lore of the Egyptians and the Chaldeans. And I can imagine how his mother talked to him in the twilight, and told him of her big dreams for him, and how, when he was away, he must not forget.

What she said was important, but what she was in the atmosphere of the home was more important. A child is very sensitive to an atmosphere. In fact, modern psychology tells us that the child's mind is about the most sensitive thing in the world. Here, for instance, is an actual happening. A bottle-fed baby in a certain hospital was getting on beautifully and gaining weight every day. Suddenly he began to grow fretful and lose weight. No physical cause could be discovered. But it was found that the nurse who was looking after him was herself nervously upset. When she was discharged, the child began at once to sleep well and to grow again.

It is in childhood that we receive those twists that often result in maladjustment when we grow older. I know a man today who is morbidly afraid of storms. He would be positively amusing if he were not so pathetic. His phobia dates from a mistake made in his tender years. I read of another child whose mother taught him differently. A child, you know, is only afraid of two things. It is afraid of falling, and it is afraid of a loud noise.
When this child was startled by thunder, his mother told him that it was one of God's voices. And she was right. One night there was a terrible story. She hurried down to the nursery, but stopped to pull herself together as she should frighten the child worse than she felt that he was already frightened. She stopped at the door. She looked in to see by the flare of lightning the little chap sitting up in bed with face radiant with delight, and he was shouting: "Louder God, louder!" Then came a terrific clash. "Fine," he said, "Stout Fellow", and lay quietly down and fell asleep.

The importance of the atmosphere is further seen from this fact. One psychologist tells us of a Christian mother whose husband was an atheist. She used to sit and sing hymns to her baby, and somehow the sense of that kindly presence stole into that little child's heart so that when the boy was only three years of age the mother broke under the strain and followed the husband into atheism. But not so, the child. Five years later the mother was desperately ill and the eight year old boy prayed for her recovery, and as a Christian man today, he is confident that God heard his prayer.

There are two things of the most vital importance that the psalmists tell us we give our children in their young and tender years. We give them their conception of God. Luther could never pray: "Our Father" with fervor because the very word "father" suggested to him one who was harshly critical and hard. If your child goes out into life with a conception of a God of love, the God who is near, the God who is sufficient for all emergencies of life, it will depend largely upon the training and atmosphere that the mother and father make in the home.
A second something that we give our children while they are children is that sense of values. What are the things that count? What are the things that are worth living for, and worth dying for? We are told that the child gets its sense of values by the time he is seven years of age; that he changes little after that. What sense of values are you giving your child? What you say counts for something. What you think counts for far more.

For instance, it is well to talk about a beauty of kindness, but it means little if you are not kind. It is well to talk about the loveliness of unselfishness, but it ends in failure if you yourself are selfish and grasping and greedy. It is well to talk about the importance of religion and worth to the Church, but it will come to naked nothing if you shunt the Church on the sideline to allow anything to take a place above it. It is well to teach honesty, but what does it amount to if you are not honest.

Here is an actual happening. A certain father and mother were accustomed to go out after the little boy had been put to bed. He found it out and objected. One night they promised that they would not go, and so promising they got him off to bed, and as they thought to sleep, therefore, they left him with his nurse and slipped out. He heard the door slam and ran to the window and watched them go. Then he said to the nurse: "Mary, there go two of the biggest liars in the world, and yet they tell me to tell the truth." If we make the right impressions, they are likely to last forever. If we make the wrong ones, they, too, may end in utter tragedy.

III

Then, what was the outcome? What did this mother do with her opportunity? What were her wages? What was her reward?
I suppose the princess sent down a bit of money each week. It was money that was no doubt greatly needed by this slave mother. But that was a mere trifle. Her real reward was something infinitely greater. What was that?

1. She had a reward of greatly giving, and therefore, of greatly loving. Motherhood is expensive. There is no denying that. "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother." That is where real motherhood always stands, but we are not for that reason to pity, for it is only as we greatly give that we greatly live. It is because of a mother's selfforgetfulness that she is crowned, and that her children rise up and call her blessed.

2. Hers was the glory of giving to the world a brave, clean soul. "By faith Moses was hid three months of his parents." That was the faith of his father and mother. "By faith Moses, when he had come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." That was his own faith. That faith, he drew in with his mother's milk. That faith, he inbreathe in the sweet atmosphere of his early home.

Look at the things that count with him. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than treasures in Egypt. Moses had his future on the steps of the throne. Moses was on the way to become king. Within reach of his hand was a power that was absolute and a wealth without limit. He might have swayed a sceptre over the greatest nation in the world at that time. But he turned his back on it all to share the lot of a hoard of slaves, to stagger under their load, weep through their tears, and bleed through their wounds, because he counted this of greater worth than all.
and power. Where did he get his sense of values? He got them from his earthly father and mother. They gave them to him, according to modern psychologists, before he was seven years of age.

3. Hers was a joy of setting a nation free, and ushering in a new day. She did not live to see it, but she doubtless sees it now from life's other side. For it was the son of this slave woman who gave to the world its greatest prophets. It was she who at last made possible the sweetest story of mankind for the shepherds abiding over the field and keeping watch over their flock by night. There is simply no measuring the power for good of a wise, intelligent mother who is genuinely consecrated to God.

And now we come to our difficult days. A day when the atmosphere is rent with cries of hate, injustice, and war. But there is a new and better day ahead. Many are thrilling over it and yearning for it. The ones who can do the most to bring it to pass are the mothers. When will the races really beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, when the mothers begin to train their children from the cradle that the Prince whom they worship is not the Prince of the sword, the Prince of the mailed-fist, not the Prince of the bloody hand. He is the Prince of Peace. Let the mothers of a single generation vitally believe that, and the Kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ.
"Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give thee thy wages." (Exodus 2:9)

This seemingly insignificant text is a part of one of the most important scenes in the Old Testament. In fact, it is one of the important scenes of history. It would be hard to overestimate its importance. Here history was made on a worldwide scale. I doubt if a battle was ever fought on land or sea that shaped the destinies of men for good as did this simple transaction on the banks of the Nile. Yet it would never have made the headlines even in that day but for the fact that a princess was involved. The other chief actor was a little Hebrew waif, an outlaw, only three months of age.

Look at the background. Years before a handful of Nomads had been scourged into Egypt by the scourge of starvation. This hungry handful of people was received by a wealthy kinsman, Joseph, by name, who had become prime minister of the great and wealthy land of Egypt. He made his kinsmen welcome, settling them in the land of Goshen, the most fertile part of the country. Here they prospered in wealth and multiplied in numbers until they threatened to outgrow the native population.

When a new king arose who knew not Joseph he felt that something ought to be done about it. This great group of foreigners he felt was a
threat to the safety of his country. It so happened that they occupied the one door of entrance into Egypt. This land was fortified on three sides. On the north by the Mediterranean Sea; on the south by unknown jungles; on the west by the Sahara Desert. The one door of entrance was the land of Goshen and that was occupied by a rapidly growing multitude of foreigners. Therefore, to make their land safe these foreigners were subjugated. To prevent their rapid growth all their boy babies were to be killed or exposed.

It is under these tragic circumstances that the baby of our story was born. He first saw the light in a little mud hut on the banks of the Nile. When his mother heard his cry she perhaps wept with him because she knew that he was under the sentence of death. But no officer came immediately on the scene. Therefore, the parents had their chance. They took a basket and lined it with pitch and prayer and set the little vessel afloat among the rushes of the Nile.

Their reason for doing this is beautifully human. They sought to preserve this baby, the story tells us, because they saw he was a proper child, citified is the way one scholar translates it. He was no clodhopper, this baby. He was a Patrician. He was exceedingly beautiful. As beautiful almost as your baby and mine. When our first born had just arrived his grandmother looked him over and said with a sublime lack of prejudice: "If I had had a room full of babies to pick from I would have picked him." How amazing! For he looked just about as much like one think as another.

Now the nurse set to watch this precious cargo was his older sister by the name of Miriam. She was doubtlessly a brilliant girl for she grew into a brilliant woman. For three months her work was rather monotonous. Then something happened that changed everything.

One day she saw a company of women coming toward the Nile. More tragic still, they seemed headed to the exact spot where the baby was hidden. She saw that this group of women was made up of no lesser personage than the princess herself and some of her ladies in waiting. She still had hope that
the baby might remain hidden if only he would keep quiet. But babies have a way of crying. Not only so but they have a way of crying at just the wrong time. So it was here. No sooner had they reached the bank of the Nile than he let out a yell.

Naturally they located the little vessel at once and towed it in to shore. Then this little craft became a battleship. The crew cannonaded the princess with his adorable weakness. He torpedoed her with his tears. In fact, he laid down such a barrage of attractiveness that she surrendered and took the little waif into her arms. Miriam, watching in the distance, knew there was nothing to fear, so she slipped out of her hiding place, hurried to the princess, bowed low, and offered to get a nurse for the baby. Her royal highness consented so off the child went to bring her own mother. When she had come the princess passed the little fellow into her arms saying with becoming haughtiness, "Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give thee thy wages."

II

Now this princess made a three-fold decision that day that was of vast importance both to Moses and to the world.

1. She decided that this little baby, though under sentence of death, was to live. That was vastly important. This baby was destined to become a genius. He was on the way to being one of the greatest leaders his amazing people have ever produced. It was a big decision, therefore, when this princess determined that this gifted baby should live and not die.

2. Not only did she decide that the baby should live but she decided to adopt him as her own. She thus decreed that he should step at one step from the lowest position, that of a slave, to the highest, that of a member of the royal family. Not only did she give to him the highest social position but she opened the door to the finest culture of that day. Moses was
trained in the best universities that Egypt had to offer. Luke tells us that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in word and deed. It is significant that the most powerful man in the Old Testament is also the best trained man in the Old Testament.

3. Not only did the princess decide that Moses should live, that he should be adopted into the royal family, but that his own mother should have the shaping of his young and tender years. This decision reaches a very climax of importance. There is no measuring the blessing that has come to mankind from the fact that Moses own mother was allowed to become his nurse and first teacher.

III

Why was this the case? Let it be said at once that it was not the case simply because that she was a mother. This is Mother's Day. We have come together wearing red carnations for the living and white carnations for the dead. It is easy to grow sentimental. It is easy to assume that the very fact that a woman is a mother guarantees her sainthood. But such is by no means the case. No woman becomes a Madonna just because she has given birth to a child. Some mothers remain silly, selfish, gossiping gadabouts to the end of the chapter. Many a child would be far better off if it were taken from its mother at the earliest possible date.

I had a friend, a great foe to the new woman, who used to have a lecture entitled "When the American Woman Becomes Man, What Then?" In other words he would say, when all the fowls of the barnyard take to crowing, who is going to cackle? But while I am all for the new woman, while I glory in her new freedom, that is not to say that she has not often fallen into the certain pitfalls that this new freedom has brought. For instance, too often the modern woman has become an imitator of man. Now it is a significant fact that when we set out to imitate anybody we usually
imitate their idiosyncrasies, often their vices instead of their virtues. This is the case with not a few women. Women are drinking more today than perhaps ever before in American history. They are certainly smoking more. I am not saying that they do not have just as much right to do these things as do men. But there is this difference. The woman is in a peculiar sense the keeper of the gate of life. A great British physician said sometime ago that not a few mastoid operations were made necessary for the child on account of the prenatal smoking of the mother. He also affirmed that far fewer women who smoke could nurse their own babies than those who don't. Somehow I do not have much hope for a newer and better America nursed in the arms of the liquor sipping, cocktail drinking motherhood. I would even be more hopeful, old foggy as I am, if the mother did not blow too much smoke in the baby's eyes. Whether a mother is a blessing to her child or a curse depends on the kind of mother she is. What kind of woman was this who gave to the world Moses?

1. She was an eager mother. She did not look upon childbearing inspite of its pains as a curse but as a blessing. She did not think of a child as a mere ball and chain about her ankle to hold her back from participation in the really worthwhile things of life. She rather looked upon the rearing of a child as the largest possible way of participation. I am thankful for the new doors that have been opened to women. I glory in the fact that women increasingly can enter every vocation that men are entering. But the vocation of motherhood is still the highest and she who deliberately turns away from it has abdicated her supremest throne and stopped her ears to the deepest and sweetest secret of human blessedness. This woman was a willing mother.

2. She was a woman of a vital religious faith. That is of vast importance. A child needs wholesome diet for his growing body but since the child is more than an animal it needs a growing diet for its spirit, mind, and heart. The need of bread is no more vital to the child than the need
of a religious faith. God pity the child that is born in a home where nobody prays. She was a woman of a deep religious faith.

3. She was a wise woman, eager to share her faith with her body. She knew that what she did about it she must do in his young and tender years. Soon he would be taken out of her arms and out of her home. Soon he would go to be exposed to the innervating luxury of the king's court. Soon he would be exposed to the religion of pagan gods. What she does she must do quickly. The same is true of every mother. A child gets its ideas of God and its sense of values, psychologists tell us, by the time it is seven years of age. The foster mother of Moses had far more to offer in many respects than his real mother, but Moses was never hers. She came on the scene too late.

I think I can hear this ancient mother talking to her little laddie as she holds him in her arms in the twilight. She tells him of her own faith in God. She tells him how that when his own life was as frail as a gossamer thread, when he had been found by the princess, out of the providence of God, he had been given back to his own mother. She told him of the great dreams that she had dreamed for him, that perhaps God would use him as a deliverer of his enslaved people. Now she said, "When you are away at the palace of the king you won't forget." And he promised, "I will not forget." And that promise he kept.

IV

What was the outcome?

1. This woman did receive her wages. How much came from the princess I do not know. That is not significant. But she received as a part of her reward the privilege of giving grandly and sacrificially. It is more blessed to give than to receive. That is the reason we celebrate this day, because Mother has been through the years the greatest giver. Her love is
the most beautifully sacrificial love that we know, except that of the love of our crucified Lord. Being privileged greatly to give, she greatly lived.

2. She had as her wages the joys of success. She made a success in the finest of all enterprises, the success of motherhood. Where that is successful all other successes come as a matter of course. Listen to a story: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents." That was the faith that his father and mother had. "When he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." That was the faith of his father and mother. This woman had so surrendered her laddie with her own faith that he had come to share that faith as naturally as roses bloom at the kiss of spring.

3. Finally, she had the reward of making the whole world better. by her fitness to her task. By and by this baby nursed in a slave hut brought to birth a new nation. By and by he gave to the world through that nation the great prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. He made possible the coming of Him about whom the angels sang above the starlit heights of Bethlehem. Everyone of us is the richer at this moment because of her faith and her loyalty to the high vocation of motherhood. But let me say this in closing: A great mother is only shown to be great by her sons and daughters. Moses might have refused the faith of his mother as beautiful as it was. He might have descended toward the depths instead of toward the heights and thus her greatness would never have been known. Every great mother is made so in part by sons and daughters who respond to her greatness. She is known to be great through them. Now most of you here gathered were blessed with consecrated mothers. What better honor can you do her today than by a wholehearted response to the faith that made her what she was. If she is still with you in the prime of life, appreciate her. Let your loyalty to her faith be a part of your appreciation.
If she is with you no longer young but as an old grandmother, don't push her armchair into a corner. Appreciate her. If she talks quite a bit about her aches and pains remember there was a time when she made more ado over a splinter in your finger than you would now over a broken bone. If she cannot walk as fast as she once did, be patient because there was a time when she was patient with you when you walked but feebly. Smooth the way for the old feet for they have taken many a step for you. Put your arms around the old stooped shoulders, they have carried many a burden for you. Kiss the old lips, they have grown soft and tender murmuring prayers for you. Be loyal to her God and it will enrich you and you will thus help to pay the wages that your mother has so richly earned.
"Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Exodus 2:9

Here is an event that took place on the banks of the Nile more than thirty centuries ago. Yet it is of vital interest to you on the banks of the Catawba. In fact, it is of vital interest to every human soul to this hour. There is not a nation on the earth that has not been touched in the yesterdays and will not be touched today and tomorrow by this important event.

That which makes this fact so important is that it has to do with a baby. Every age has its own problems. There are problems that confront us today and press hard for a solution, but the supreme question of today and of every day is the baby question. As goes the baby, so goes the world. This is plainly evident to every one of us. Though we look for the big events of the day on the front page of our papers, those events that are truly great are usually printed in fine print at the back of the paper. They tell of the coming of babies.

Why is the baby question so important? For the simple reason that there is an army of invaders marching upon our land that is going to take over everything that we have. That army is going to take over every home, every place of business, every seat in Congress. It is going to take over the White House. It is going to take over every school, college, university and church. Absolutely nothing that you and I possess will be left to us. Who constitutes that army? It is made up of the boys and girls that are now in our homes.

Since this is the case, we can readily see that if there is a better tomorrow for us, it must come about through better children. Always the world moves either towards hell or towards heaven on the feet of little children. The biggest question, then for us today as parents, the biggest
question for us as citizens, the biggest question for the individual child, is what we are to do for and with our babies.

I

Look, then, at this scene. It is one of complete blackness except for one fact - that is the fact of a little child. Always the dawning of a new day has begun with the birth of a baby. What is the value of that handful of helplessness in the arms of Mary in the stable at Bethlehem? Rome's armies have conquered the world, Roman eagles have spread their black wings over little Palestine. Rome seems all that counts. Yet this Bethlehem babe is infinitely more mighty than the Roman empire. He is still the dominant figure in the world while this great empire has been dead centuries.

When this child Moses was born, the day was dark. A few centuries before his birth, his ancestors had moved into Egypt, a handful of half-starving shepherds. They were allowed to settle because they seemed so utterly insignificant. A kinsman of theirs had gone into the land of Goshen, the most part of the Egyptian nation.

But these nomads were a peculiar people. First, they were very prolific. They multiplied so rapidly that they now numbered hundreds of thousands.

Second, they were people that held themselves aloof. They refused to inter-marry and become thus a part of the nation. They became then, as they had ever been, a nation within a nation.

Third, they showed themselves marvelously skilled in acquiring wealth.

Fourth, they were strategically located.

If you may look at the map of Egypt through the eyes of your imagination, you will realize that for that day it was fortified on every side except one. On the north it was defended by the Mediterranean Sea; on the south by im-
There penetrable jungles; on the west by the Sahara Desert. There was only one gate through which an army had ever been able to touch the soil of Egypt and that was through the Land of Goshen. But this gate was now held by a vigorous and growing people on whom the Egyptians could not depend.

Therefore, for reasons of state, they decided that something must be done about the situation. They did not drive these Hebrews out of the land. They decided to profit by them. With that in view, they cut them off from all privileges of citizenship and put them in labor camps. In addition, their boy babies were ordered executed. This was to arrest their rapid growth. Therefore, when Moses was born, he was born under sentence of death. Humanly speaking, there was no hope for him; there was no hope for his people.

But it so happened that this bit of helplessness, while born in a mud hut on the banks of the Nile, had parents who were vitally religious. Believing that God had a purpose in their child and believing that God and one man or one woman make a majority, they braved the wrath of the King. When they could no longer hide the baby at home, they made for him a small boat and set him among the reeds on the waters of the Nile. His mother could not watch him - she was a slave and had to work.

This made necessary a character that has come to great prominence in our day. Here we are introducing to you the first baby-sitter in the Old Testament. This baby sitter was a bright young girl named Miriam. She had character and courage and keen wits that were developed in the face of danger. Here was a monotonous task for a while, but one day the monotony was broken. It came about in this fashion. She saw a company of women, the Princess and some of her ladies-in-waiting, making their way to bathe in the waters of the Nile. As she watched them, her heart stood still with fear, for they were hard by where the baby was hidden. As was inevitable under the circumstances, the strange craft was found by the Princess herself.
She ordered this vessel to be brought to her and when she opened it and saw the child, she could not resist his winsomeness. "The babe wept," said the story, "and she had compassion."

Miriam saw all this and knew that her opportunity had come. She hurried forward and made this wise suggestion: "Shall I go and call to you a nurse from the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for thee?" "Go," was the haughty command. And Miriam went and brought the child's mother and the Princess put the babe in her arms saying, "Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages."

II

I daresay it never occurred to this princess how important were the decisions that she was making at that time. She really made three decisions.

1. She decided to reverse the sentence of death that had been pronounced against this child. She reversed the decision of Pharaoh and said, "This child is not going to be put to death. He is going to live."

2. A second important decision that she made was that she was going to adopt him. There is always something good about anybody who adopts a child. By thus adopting Moses, she guaranteed to him opportunities that could never have been his in any other way. She thus exposed him to the culture of the most cultivated court of that day. She exposed him to the best teachers, to the best schools. Moses is perhaps the greatest man of the Old Testament. He is certainly one of the best trained men of the Old Testament. Luke tells us that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."

3. But the strangest decision of the princess was the choice of
a nurse. In choosing the one who was to train the child in his young and tender years, she chose the manner of man that this child was to become. It is good to be well born but it is the most important factor in developing the character of a child is the teaching it receives in its plastic years.

This is the case, is the contention of this wise old Book, the Bible, "Train up a child in the way it will go and when it is old it will not depart from it." To this assertion modern science says "Amen". I think there is nothing upon which the psychologists are in more complete agreement that this fact - "Children are not so much born as made."

This is also the verdict of experience. We have seen nations in recent years changed in a generation by the training of children. It is a law just as the law of gravity that whatsoever a man soweth, even to the heart of a child, that shall he also reap.

Now, for this princess with her hope and dreams for this adopted child, this choice was a mistake. Had she chosen an Egyptian nurse, the Moses we know would never have lived. He would have been trained in the Egyptian religion. He might have become the greatest Pharaoh that Egypt ever knew but he would not have become the law giver of the ages.

The princess made the mistake of thinking that she could counteract his early training. She had so much to offer. She had a wealth that was almost without limit. She had power that was absolute. Had Moses remained loyal to his adopted mother he might have had the throne of Egypt. Instead he cast in his lot with a bunch of slaves. The princess was doubtless disappointed in her adopted son to the point of heartbreak. But if you give your child to be nursed by one of no faith or of opposite faith to your own, do not be surprised if you lose the child.
But while the choice of a nurse was a mistake so far as the princess was concerned, it was most fortunate for the baby, for the people of which he was a part. It was most fortunate for the world. In fact, the princess could not have made a wiser choice, for this princess chose to give the child to be nursed by its own mother.

III

Why was this choice so wise?

Let it be said at once that it was not a wise choice merely because the nurse was the child's mother. The greatest blessing that could come to some babies today would be to be taken out of their mother's arms. That sounds harsh a thing to say but it is true. Many children would do better even to be trained in institutions than in the home of which it is a part.

When we first began to celebrate Mother's Day, it was a most sentimental affair. I remember still the first sermon of this kind I ever preached. I was pastor of a college church. This is not generally a sentimental congregation, yet we bawled as if our own mothers had just died. We went on the easy assumption that by merely giving birth to a baby, every woman became a heroine and a kind of holy madonna.

But, of course, such sentimental slush does not rise to the height of dignified nonsense. Many a woman begins and continues, even after motherhood, to be as giddy and gaddty as ever. Motherhood at its best is the most beautiful something in the world, but there are mothers so utterly worthless that a child begins life because of her with a heavy handicap.

The choice of this mother was wise for at least three good reasons.

1. She was a woman of vital religious faith. I put the emphasis on vital. Merely to be nominally religious may even do more harm than good. Many of us get so inoculated with Christianity that many times never takes. She had a profound faith in God. She believed in his purpose for her baby.
She believed in ___ for the individual life. This faith made her daring.

Let me add too that it was also the faith of her husband. This husband did not shirk the responsibility for the training, leaving all of this training to his wife. I have known few fathers who thought that their responsibility to their children ended when they had provided for the physical needs. Of course, this is grossly false. A child needs the bread of life just as much as it needs physical bread. To guarantee the best opportunity for the child, the father and mother should both be vitally religious. It is far better, too, if they belong to the same faith.

2. Not only was this woman a woman of deep religious faith, but she believed that her faith could be believed by her child. Even in that distant day she was wise enough to know that religion can be taught. The fact that your child knows the multiplication table is an indication that it has been taught. He did not reach up and pull it down out of the air. No more will the child learn the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Shepherd's Psalm, the difference between right and wrong by gathering them out of the air.

Religion, then, can and must be taught. Of course, this teaching must go hand in hand with right examples. What we say is of no avail if we do not act up to our own teaching. For while religion can be taught, in a more profound sense, it can be caught. The atmosphere of love and courage in the home will do more to shape the character of the child for good than anything else.

3. This woman showed herself wise in that she realized that what she did for her child, she must do in the few brief years that she was to be his nurse. Soon Moses was going to be taken into the corrupt court. Soon influences, flatly contradictory to the ones this mother valued were to be brought to bear upon her son. Therefore she said to herself, "What I do, I must do quickly."

Soon this baby will be beyond my reach forever. Here is my chance, with no
second chance forevermore. I must use it wisely and well."

Now, while your child is not to be adopted into some other family, it is soon to be adopted into this big, rough world of ours. Therefore, what you do, you must do quickly. The psychologists tell us that the child gets its idea of God, its idea of good, by the time it is seven years of age. Here, then, is your opportunity. If you use it wisely and well, nothing can defeat you. If you fail, your chances of victory are small indeed. This ancient mother, knowing her time was short, gave her gifted son her best.

IV

What was the outcome?

The princess had promised her certain wages. How much did she receive? I do not know. But her real wages, reward that has grown larger with the passing of the centuries, that she was able to give to the world a stalwart and consecrated son.

Listen to this word: "Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months of his parents." That bit of daring conduct was born of the faith of those who loved him. For here is another word: "Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. That was his own faith. It was the faith that he had been taught by his parents. It was a faith that he had embraced in the very atmosphere of his humble little home.

Upheld by that faith, he renounced the throne to cast in his lot with a handful of slaves. Upheld by that faith, he led a new nation to ____. Through the power of that faith he gave to the world, in a profound sense, the greatest prophet. In the power of that faith he made possible the coming of the Son of God.

There, then, his word of hope for a dark day. The world moves forward, up or down, on the feet of little children. The voice of God's word, the
voice of science, the voice of law, all agree that what our children be-
come depends upon the training we give them. If we solve aright the child
problem, then our troubled and vexed world will move into a better day,
Then, and only then, will we come closer to that great hour when the gates
of this world shall become the gates of our God and of his Christ.
THE LIVING FIRE

"They looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not burned."

Exodus 3:2

Here is a story that comes to us out of the long gone past. It wears a queer garb. It speaks what at first seems a strange language to our ears. Yet in this simple story we find the secret of the greatest life in the Old Testament. Without this event the Moses we know would never have lived. Without this scene the man whose influence is told on every nation in the world had gone to his grave having achieved no greater destiny than the shepherd of a flock of sheep not his own. Here Moses was reborn. Here this man came into vital contact with the living God. Through this experience he became a new creation.

I.

To this experience Moses brought his own background even as you and I. This man had had a marvelous history. Glance at the broad outlines of his life. No Alger story could be more thrilling. The wildest leap from rags to riches was experienced by this man.

He was born under circumstances that seemed the most adverse possible. His father and mother were slaves. Since he was a boy baby he was born with a sentence of death pronounced against him. A decree had gone out from the Pharaoh of Egypt that every boy baby should be put to death. To all appearances here was a baby without hope.

But over against these terrible liabilities there were some assets. In the
first place it was his good fortune to be born into a home that, though under the curse of slavery, had the benediction of a vital faith in God. The father and mother of Moses were no ordinary people. Though slaves in body they were in heart and conscience free. In spite of all limitations, they believed that the God of Israel was greater than Pharaoh of Egypt. They believed also that this child of theirs was his child. "By faith," the writer to the Hebrews says with fine insight, "Moses was hid three months by his parents." They lined a basket with pitch and dauber, put this beautiful baby in it, and set it among the bulrushes of the Nile because they believed that God through their help was going to make this baby a blessing to the world.

But it is impossible to hide a live baby for long. By and by somebody found Moses. In the providence of God he was found by the one person in Egypt who was at once willing and able to protect him. This Egyptian princess that opened her arms and heart to Moses must have been a good woman. I think we have never given her the credit that is due her. It was love at first sight with her. At once she was gripped with the longing to save Moses. Being who she was she was able to save him.

Having taken this little waif into her arms she made three tremendous decisions regarding him. No bigger transaction ever took place in Egypt than those decisions. First, she decided that this baby though under sentence of death was to be spared. That was vastly important. Second, she decided that not only was this baby to live, but he was to be her own. He was to become a part of the royal family. He was to make one tremendous step from slavery to royalty. He was to live not among the mud huts of the Hebrews, but in the palace of Pharaoh. He was to be trained for a great destiny. One day he was to be ruler of the mightiest nation in the world. But the final and most important decision that this woman made was that Moses should be nursed by his own mother.

I am quite sure that the princess never realized the vast importance of that
decision. Had she done so she would not have made it. She expected Moses to be her very own, and as the years slipped by she began to dream great dreams for this son of hers. She loved him as her very own. She could not fail to see that he had the ability of a genius. He would be the greatest Pharoah that Egypt had ever known. But meantime there was a Hebrew mother who was also dreaming great dreams for this boy. She was privileged to have him in his young and tender years. She made those impressions that last. She breathed her faith into his heart and made him her very own. "By faith Moses was hid," that was the faith of his parents. "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter . . . . . " That was Moses' faith.

Naturally the high, hot passion of this good mother's soul was the freedom and destiny of her people. She saw to it that Moses shared her passion and her hope. As a youth he was interested in the horde of slaves that were his own people, but above whom he had been lifted by such vast heights. One day when he had grown to manhood he went out to visit the brickyards to see how fared it with his oppressed people. Here he saw something that made his soul fairly leap to its feet in fiery indignation. An Egyptian taskmaster was brutally beating a Hebrew slave. Moses lost his temper completely, struck the Egyptian with the first thing that came to his hand, and the fellow toppled over dead.

No doubt Moses had no intention of killing the brute. But when he saw what he had done he was not very remorseful. He rather said in the language of our day, "He asked for it." Therefore quite complacently he flung him into a shallow grave and went back to the palace. If the authorities learned of it his position would save him from danger. But he was quite sure that his fellows would keep a secret. They would certainly be wise enough to realize that he had struck a blow in their behalf. Therefore Moses went back to the palace feeling as if he had made one small step toward his purpose of freeing his people.

But his easy complacency was soon rudely upset. When he went out another
day he saw two Hebrews striving with each other. It filled him with indignation that they should fight against each other instead of making common cause with a common foe. Therefore he tried the role of peacemaker. "Quit it," he said, "you are brethren." Then one of the fighters turned on him with a snarl, "Who made you a judge over us?" he asked, "Do you mean to kill me like you did the Egyptian the other day?"

That surly word sounded the deathknell to Moses' best hopes and dreams. These brutes had no appreciation. They were totally without gratitude. He thought he could depend upon them, but now he saw that he could not. They would be eager to expose him to the first taskmaster that came along. Of course his deed might make a bit of trouble for him if it came to the ears of Pharaoh. But the heavy blow was that his people were not only enslaved in body, but in soul as well. "To undertake to help such poor trash," he told himself, "would be sheer futility. There was nothing for him but to chuck the whole matter and quit the country."

Thus he did. He made his way to the Desert of Midian. Our first glimpse of him shows that he still has something of his old fire. There is a priest named Jethro who had only daughters. These daughters kept his flocks. One day they came home earlier than usual. Their father asked an explanation. "Then we had drawn water for our flocks," was the reply, "the other shepherds who were men came to drive us away as usual. But no sooner had they begun than a swarthy, husky man springing up from nowhere and wielded his staff so vigorously that they were glad to let us have the water that we had drawn."

"Where is he?" Jethro asked. "Why did you not bring him home?" At once a runner is dispatched and the queer guest is made welcome. In his rebound he married one of the priest's daughters. It was an unfortunate marriage. They really had nothing in common. I think Moses married her out of sheer loneliness. Then followed bitter days during which he tried to adjust himself to his new life. Here he was a product of the best Egyptian universities, a man of genius, a prince
who had once had his foot upon the steps to the throne of the greatest nation in the world. Now he has thrown it all down. No wonder he named his first born a name that signifies, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."

But time is a wonderful healer. By and by he began to get used to the quiet life of a shepherd. He was able little by little to forget the sufferings of his people, even the anguish of his father and mother. The fact that he had quit, of course, made his cheeks go hot with shame at times. But he would say to himself fiercely, "It is all their fault. I tried to do something for them, but nobody appreciated it. It is true I quit the first time I met any serious opposition, but there was nothing else to do. I am well fixed here, I will go quietly on to the end."

What chance would you think that this man would have to change? He is far past the springtime of life. "Can a man be born anew when he is old?" He can, but it is a rare miracle. I should have said that this man would have gone quietly on his way to the end of his journey. Yet, one day he went out with no higher purpose than the leading of a flock of sheep, the next day he went out to become the storm center of his generation and to participate in the birth of a nation. And the secret of it was that God spoke to him.

II.

"The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and, behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." What was there in this strange sight to speak to Moses? What did this burning bush say to this gifted and complacent old man who was not throwing his life entirely away, but who was spending it at least for a poor second best?

1. As Moses looked at this bush all aflame the first word it said to him was, "You were once like that." A mission worker in the east end of London sat
"The Living Fire"

one night talking to an outcast woman. It so happened that this mission worker had a white flower in her hand. Then she asked the weeping woman the cause of her tears. She replied by reaching a fading finger and touching the petals of the white flower she said, "I used to be like that." And Moses as he looked at the bush said, "I used to burn. Once I was all aglow. Once the hot fires of holy enthusiasm burned upon the altar of my heart."

2. But this bush spoke a second word. It not only reminded Moses of his hot yesterday, it reminded him of his bleak today. "Once" he said, "you were all aflame, but the fire has gone out long ago. Once you grew hot and indignant when you saw might triumph over right. Once it made you hot with rage to see splendor ride upon the boney shoulders of squalor. But you do not get excited any more. Your fire has gone out. You simply say, 'I tried to help once, but nobody appreciated me. I am too old to start again.'"

3. Then this burning bush put its finger on a weak place in Moses' life. It touched the diseased part of his soul. It told him not only that the fire that once burned had gone out, but it gave the reason. "Moses, you are no longer aflame. Why?" Moses could not answer "because my people have been set free." They were still slaves. He could not say, "I am no longer needed." He was desperately needed. "Why have you quit? Why have you given over the fight?"

Had Moses been like many of us he would have said, "I tried once." I have an idea that he had told himself that ten thousand times. But such a work stuck in his throat here. He was not quite shameless enough to say, "I had a right to quit. After I had struck a single blow. I had a right to quit because a special committee did not wait on me to thank me for that blow. I had a right to quit because nobody wrote me up in the paper. Nobody seemed to show any appreciation." The hopelessness of the outlook might have helped Moses to quit, but it is not the real reason. This is evidenced by the fact that when his best days were over he undertook the task.
Why, I repeat, did your fire go out? In other words, what has the bush, Moses, that you do not have? The answer is, "God was in the bush." You thought you could win in your own strength. How silly and how tragic. A score of years ago Russia headed out to build a nation that many thought was to be the nearest approach to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But that "Kingdom of Heaven has changed very largely into a Kingdom of Hell. This is true because the leadership of Russia tried to ditch God. No nation, no civilization, no individual can get on without God. I speak of building a new world, but a new world can only be built by new men, and nobody can make new men but God. "I have failed," says Moses, "because I tried to win in my own strength." But now God comes to this failure and gives him another chance. Thank God for the second chance. "Come," he said, "Now I will send thee to Pharoah." God always acts in the "now." "I failed yesterday." Yes, that is true, but yesterday is not now. God uses failures. He is shut up to them because we have all failed. "Now I will send thee."

But Moses is not yet convinced. "Who am I that I should go?" I fumbled years ago. I struck out even in my youth. I am an old man now. I remember still the snarl of my own countrymen when he said, "Who made you a judge?" I was self appointed. But why should I do better now?" And God answers, "Because I am going with you. Certainly I will be with thee. It is not a question of what you are, it is a question of what I am."

There is a story told of the great violinist, Paganini, whether it is a fact or not matters little. It is said that he had a marvelous violin that he loved almost as if it were human. One night when he was to play a concert, some friends dared to play a joke on him. They slipped his marvelous instrument from the case and put in its place a cheap fiddle. Just before the great artist walked on the stage he discovered the exchange. At first he was dismayed. Then his accompanist heard him say softly, "I will show them that the music is not in the violin, but it is in Paganinni." And the resources that Moses needed, and that you and I need
are not in ourselves, they are within God. "Certainly I will be with thee."

III.

It was to this call and this promise of God that Moses dared to begin life anew. Even when he was old he found himself in the Land of Beginning Again. What did this experience do for him?

1. It set him to doing what he had for years regarded as a hopeless and impossible task. With nothing but a shepherd's crook in his hand he set out for no lesser purpose than the invading of the greatest nation in the world and the setting free of a horde of slaves. This shepherd's crook had been dedicated to God. That is a significant story still, "What is that in thy hand?" God asked of Moses. "A rod." "Throw it down." He threw it down and it became a servant. Resources unused curse rather than bless. "Pick it up," God said. And as Moses picked it up it became a shepherd's crook again. But it was a crook that had been dedicated. And what is dedicated to God comes to share something of the might of God.

2. Not only did Moses make a new start, but he persisted. A few weeks ago I tried to preach to you on "Our Great Danger". What is the greatest danger that threatens us as Christians? It is fainting. All of us have fine impulses, all of us at times look wistfully toward the heights, all of us make good starts, but something happens. The world throws cold water upon the fires of our enthusiasm. The bleak winds blow our spluttering candles and they go out. But when the writer to the Hebrews sought for the most marked characteristic of this mighty spiritual giant he said, "It was his capacity to hold on. He endured." That is the word. The forces of Egypt withstood him. His own people disappointed him and broke his heart. Those of his own household turned against him. But he endured.

3. Finally, as a result of this new start he not only became a new man and
began a new enterprise, but he won through. He accomplished God's purpose in his life. He made possible the flock of skylarks that sang in the hearts of all the Psalmists. He made possible the great Prophets. He made possible the manger story. He made possible the mighty magnate of the cross.

Now the scene changes from that far off day to this. There are some of us who need to start anew. Do not say it is too late. Do not say it is impossible.

"Each day is a new beginning,
Each morn is the world made new;
Oh you who are weary of sinning,
Here is a hope and a chance for you."

"Now I will send thee to Pharaoh." Just where your Pharaoh is, I do not know. It may be across the sea. The chances are it is in your own town, in your own home. Wherever it is, it is your privilege to go to it in the fellowship of God. Thus your life will be made new, and you will help to make life new for others.
Exodus 3:2 - An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked and lo the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

This strange and seemingly insignificant story is full of abiding interest. It interests us in the first place because it has to do with one of the greatest personalities of the Old Testament. It tells how Moses was converted, how life was made anew for him, how even in his old age he made a right about face and set out to accomplish the impossible. Not only did he set out on this quest, but he brought it to pass.

Then it grips us in the second place because it has in it such a glad and thrilling surprise. We did not expect anything revolutionary to happen in the life of this man. The expectations that he had excited in himself and in others had been dead doubtless for many long years. We never expected him to be vastly different from what he is now. Had you said to one of the rustics "You see that old man going out in front of his sheep? Tomorrow he's going to set out to bring a new nation to birth." That rustic would not have been so stupid that he wouldn't have shaken his head and said "impossible!"

Part I

Why do we expect so little of Moses? First, Moses is now an old man. Men do not start revolutions, as a rule, either in themselves or in others when they are old. Moses is now four score years of age. The beautiful radiance and romance of youth is a far gone memory. He is no longer young. He is no longer a dreamer of dreams or a seer of visions. He does not expect himself to be vastly different from what he is.
The Conversion of Moses

greatly

Personally I have never been frightened by the almanac. Yet the theiving years do take some treasurers out of our hands that we would like to keep. The years have a tendency to take our strength. At 80 we are not as strong as we were at 40. We can't do the tasks as well as we once did it. We have reached that place where anything even as light as a grasshopper becomes a burden. Not only has our strength abated, but we have lost in some measure our spirit of daring. We are not as venturous as a rule as we once were.

"He shall be afraid of that which is high," said the wise writer in Ecclesiastes. The lure of the distant and the difficulty no longer grip him. He said "I'm too old to make this high adventure." So we do not expect much of this man as he goes out in the front of his flock. He is now an old man.

The second reason why we expect little of him is because he has found what everybody is seeking today, and that is security. He has nothing to fear in a material way for the future. He has an easy and comfortable job. He has no fear of losing that job. It's looking after the sheep of his father-in-law. Not only will he not lose his job, but his security is increased by the fact that soon his father-in-law will pass to his reward and all Moses will have to do is to step into his shoes. And thus he has found material security. There is no fear for the future. Along with this there has come a certain contentment. God has never been able to do much with the folks who are content to worship the god of things as they are. If your cup is already full, you are not likely to hold
it up for His filling. It is the man who hungers and thirsts who bestirs himself to seek satisfaction. There has come to this man a kind of content to let things continue as they are.

This is the case in spite of the fact that he has had his hours of restlessness and wretchedness. This is the case in spite of the fact that there have been times when he all but broke his heart over his lost yesterday. But he has rationalized about it and argued it down 'til now he is contented to let things be as they are. And he could have sung with the truth of one of our modern poets

I think my soul is a tame old duck,
Paddling around in barnyard muck,
Fat and lazy with useless wings,
But sometimes when the North wind stings
And the wild ones hurtle over head
It remembers something lost and dead,
And cocks a wary and bewildered eye
And makes a feeble attempt to fly.
It is fairly content with the state it's in,
But it isn't the duck it might have been.

Moses is old and has found a kind of security that makes him contented, in a measure, to keep on the road he is now travelling.

A third reason, and biggest of all, that I expect nothing from Moses is because he had made a great failure in his yesterday. What expectations he had excited among those closest to him in life's bright morning. He was born under sentence of death, but his pious parents, seeing that he was a proper child, - that is a suggestive word. All our children are like that. I remember when my first born came, his grandmother looked him over; and boy, he looked about as much like one thing as another; she said "if I'd had a house full of babies, I'd have picked him." These people, believing that God had a purpose in the
life of their baby, sought to keep him alive. This they did in spite of the threat of death over him. By and by that baby having been hidden among the rushes, was discovered and given back to the arms of his own Mother, who trained him in her faith, taught him to share her dreams and her hopes, and breathed into him the conviction that God was going to deliver his people through him. Then he was adopted into the royal family, where he was exposed to the finest culture and the finest educational opportunities of his day.

It is a rather significant fact that the greatest personality of the Old Testament is about the best trained man in the Old Testament. And Moses, having been adopted into the royal family, held to the purpose that his Mother and Father had breathed into his heart, of delivering his people. One day he went out to visit these slaves, and he saw an Egyptian bully imposing upon one of his own race, and he was made of inflammable stuff, this man Moses, (and he was a strong man, and) he struck the Egyptian dead. I do not think it was his purpose to kill him, but when he found he had done this he went back to the place in no wise dismayed. He told himself that he had taken the first step toward the freedom of his people.

But when he went out the next day to bask in the appreciation that he was sure these down-trodden souls would give him because he had become their champion, he saw two of them striving with each other. And when he sought to set them at peace, one turned on him and said "Who made you a judge over us? You mean to tell me you did that Egyptian yesterday?" That came as a revelation. That blasted Moses high dreams. He realized
that these people had no appreciation. Not only so, he was
certain that the man he was trying to defend, to set free, would
expose him to the first Egyptian task master that came by. "Why," he said to himself "you're impossible. You're so sodden in
slavery that you don't want to be free".

Thus his great purpose of bringing about the deliverance of
his people fell into utter ruins. This having happened, he took to his heels. He was running, not because he was afraid of the King, said the writer to the Hebrews. His foster Mother could have protected him there. He was afraid of a task that was impossible. He was afraid to undertake what he had become quite sure he could never put through. He said there's no doing anything with these people. And whenever we face a task and say it can't be done, then we're already defeated.

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees and looks to God alone,
Laugh at impossibilities and cries "It shall be done!"

Unless we go about it in that spirit, we're apt to meet with defeat.

It's so easy when we're confronted with a task that ought to be done, if it's difficult, to say that "I can't do it," nobody can do that. Moses said "Nobody can do anything with these miserable wretches. I'm not going to try." The great tasks of life have never been put over by the folks who say that it's impossible, therefore I'm going to shirk it.

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
But he with a chuckle replied,
Maybe it couldn't, but he wouldn't be one
To say so until he'd tried.
So he buckled right in, with a bit of a grin
On his face, if he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing.
That could not be done, and he did it!
Now thousands will tell you it cannot be done,
Now thousands will prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out one by one
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But buckle right in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That can not be done and you'll do it.

(If you do it in the spirit of God faith in God) But Moses said
it couldn't be done and so he took to his heels, made his way
to the Wilderness of Midian, where he was desperately lonely
and wretched, I think, for many long days. And then on rebound
he made a rather unfortunate marriage and his loneliness and
sickness of heart come out in the name he gave his first born;
a name that signifies "I've been a stranger in a strange land."

But he got a job with his father-in-law, and little by little
he forgot his quest. He forgot the supreme purpose of
his life and settled down to the routine of looking after
another man's sheep and life looks as if it would have ended
that way. He was old, he was secure in his contentness and he
had behind him a great failure, and he said when he thought
of it "I tried once, but they didn't want to be free," and so I'm
going to let them alone.

Yet it was this man that brought to birth a new nation.

Part II

How did it come about? Well, the first move was that of God.
That is always the case. We disappoint Him, we let Him down, but
He never lets us off. He is persistent. We fail to listen
until our ears grow stopped, we fail to see 'til our eyes grow dim. But the vision splendid is always
there. However often we may slam the door in His face, He
still stands at that door and knocks. Now the great danger is that we will become less sensitive as the years go by. But God is a persistent God. He never lets us alone. He never allows us to end in disaster, until he has done his infinite best to save us.

How did He speak to Moses? He spoke in a language that Moses could understand. One day as this man was keeping his flock, he looked up to see a little bush all aflame. Now fire is always arresting. It is hard to ignore fire. A commonplace house, if it's on fire, is exciting. A church that is on fire is all irresistible. A man that is on fire cannot be ignored. Even a bush on fire drew the attention of this busy man Moses.

Then God could speak to him because, though Moses was old and in a measure content, he hadn't altogether lost a child's heart. He could still have his curiosity aroused. He said "I will turn aside and see this great sight." That turning aside is important. He led his sheep and didn't allow his sheep to lead him. He controlled his business and did not allow his business to control him. He didn't say "I would turn aside, but I'm afraid I'll lose one of my sheep." He said "I'll turn aside and see this." And when he turned aside God was able to speak to him.

What did He say to Moses through this burning bush? He told him in the first place of his great yesterday. He said "You once saw the flame; you once burned with high hopes for the rescue of your people; you once burned with a hot indignation against falsehood and injustices; you once all ablaze, but it's gone out now; it's died down to gray ashes. And yet it made him
remember his radiant yesterday.

I was in a meeting of preachers sometime ago and the president of the meeting struck me as a typical old ecclesiastic, about as cold as an icicle and hard as a nail. But a young chap got up and gave a marvelous testimony of God's dealing with himself and then how God had used him, in a mighty revival. And this old ecclesiastic sat and looked at him and listened to him and then broke up and he suddenly put his head down in his hands and sobbed like a little lost child. It took me greatly by surprise at first, but as I looked on and listened I think I understood what it meant as he had heard this young man's testimony and how God had used him, he said to himself "I was once like that. I was once all ablaze with enthusiasm for my Lord. I once had power with God and with man, but somehow the care with things and the struggle with machines has put out the holy fire till it is dead and it breaks my heart to look at the gray ashes."

But if this message had in it a rebuke for his yesterday, it held out a dauntless hope for tomorrow. It said though the fire has gone out, it may blaze again. Why did it go out? What does this bush have that you have lacked? It has God in it. You went out once all aflame and in your own self sufficiency struck one blow for the freedom of your people, and when things didn't turn out, you threw it all down and took to your heels, you weren't undergirded by the everlasting arm. This bush has God in it. That's what keeps it burning. You let go of God's hand. That's the reason your fire has gone out. But even if it has gone out, it may be rekindled. You do not have to continue in the dark. You do not have to continue
with nothing upon the altar of your soul but gray ashes. The tragedy of so many of us ministers is that the fire has gone out upon the altars of our hearts. The tragedy of so many in the pew is that the fire has gone out. The tragedy of so many cold churches is that the fire has gone out. But God still lives and the fire that could even make a bush burn and not be consumed can also make us burn.

When God said to Moses "Come now, I will send thee to Pharaoh," Moses is still not fully convinced. He shrinks back, mindful of the failures of long years, saying "Who am I that failed that first great opportunity, and who am I that have delayed and lingered and waited and put off for forty long years? Who am I that I should go?" And God said "you are putting the accent on the wrong syllable. It is not who you are, it's who I am!"

There's a story that when the great Paginini was to play a certain concert a friend played a joke on him by substituting for his fine Stradivarius a common, cheap fiddle. And when the great artist saw what had been done, he was at first dismayed, and then he pulled himself together and he said "I'll show these friends that the power is not in the instrument but in the master of the instrument." And he played to the bewilderment of all that heard him. The power is not in what we are, but is in Him who said "all things are possible to him that believeth;"certainly I will be with thee." That makes the difference between life and death. That makes the difference between disaster and victory.
PART III

So what? Thus encouraged, Moses, though an old man, made the high adventure. I saw him set out the next morning with nothing but a staff in his hand and God in his heart. And I said "Friend do you see that old man? He is going to invade the face of the greatest nation on the earth, the most powerful. Not only so, but he is going to bring the people enslaved by that nation into freedom. He's going to bring about the birth of a nation; a nation that will enlighten the world as no other nation ever has." Everybody would have said "impossible!". Moses knew it was impossible, but it was made possible through God.

Having set out, Moses didn't find everything easy. He found it even harder than he had in youth's morning. But with God in his heart we read of him this - that he endured. He had a way of keeping on. The king opposed him, but he endured. His own people opposed him even more. It seems to me that if there ever was a cantankerous bunch of cry babies, it was this group that Moses sought to lead from bondage to freedom. They were always wailing, they were always whining that he didn't lead them to die in Egypt. And with all that he did and sacrificed for them, they never found a single right thing he'd done. Everything was always wrong. Look through the whole record and there was never a word of appreciation.

This does not mean that they did not honor Moses. They did. That makes it all the more wicked that they never did express any word of appreciation to him. When he went way on the mountain and didn't come back, they said to Aaron
"Up, make us gods to go before us. As for this Moses, we know not what has become of him. What a tribute that was." They were saying, all unconsciously, since Moses is gone so far as we're concerned, God is gone. Their only glimpse of the God unseen was through him, and yet they were such miserable ingrates that they never told him about it. And Moses with the opposition of the king, and with the opposition and utter lack of appreciation on the part of his people kept on, with the result that he did accomplish the impossible. He brought a new nation to birth. He did what nobody could have done except by the help of God. And this he did because he dared respond when God said "Come," now I will send thee to Pharaoh.

PART IV

Now this story has something to say to us. In fact it is as new as the first blush of spring. It is as new as your latest heart beat. It says this: You too have a Pharaoh. I too have a Pharaoh. God has given to every man his work. He has pitted us against a difficult day. It has become our lot to live through the most tense, the most hate torn, the most period hell torn. It would seem almost of human history.

While the world is at its worst is a great time for you and me. It is a great time for the Church to be at its best. You have a Pharaoh. It may be your own home. It may be a close as the pew on which you sit. It may be in some distant part of the earth. But God is saying "I will send thee to Pharaoh." You have it in your power to refuse, or you have it in your power to say "Yes". If you do refuse, whatever
crows life may put upon your brow, whatever victories may be yours, the ultimate goal of it all will be a disaster as deep and dark as that woven out of the warp and woof of desolation and death. There's nothing but ultimate failure for the man who flaunts the will of God.

On the other hand, if you accept the will of God, if you respond to it, then nothing can defeat you, nothing can keep your life from being a thing of ultimate victory. Though you may be called upon to suffer, though you may have to live in a whirlwind and die in a storm, it will be for you only the rocking of an infant's cradle while you are safe in the arms of Him that loves you and saves you by His grace. So to everyone, whether you are six, sixteen, or sixty; whether you are nine, nineteen, or ninty; God is making this call "Come, now I will send thee to Pharaoh." God give us the courage to respond aright.
Here is a seemingly queer and unimportant story that comes to us out of a long gone past. It comes dressed in a rather strange garb. We are at a loss to know whether this vision was objective or subjective. But it is well to bear in mind that here for one man was the gate of the Land of Beginning. Again. But for this experience, the Moses we know would never had existed. But for this experience the greatest man of the Old Testament would doubtless have gone to his grave having filled no greater destiny than that of shepherd to another man's sheep.

- I -

Moses came to this experience over a long and eventful road. His story from the standpoint of thrill adventure as hard to equal. Here we find him living among rustics. Here we find him carrying on a task that almost any man could carry on. Yet he is a man of the schools. He has been trained in the best institutions of his day. Not only so, but he has been exposed to the culture of the court of Pharaoh. How did he come to be what he is and where he is?

Many years before his ancestors came into Egypt not of their own accord, but scurged by starvation. The way had been prepared for them by a greatly wronged young man by the name of Joseph, who had been sold into slavery. These nomads here settled in the most fertile part of Egypt, the land of Goshen. Here they prospered. Here they so multiplied in number that they threatened to out-number the Egyptians themselves.

Then a new dynasty came to the throne. The Hebrew people came to be feared. Egypt was fortified on three sides by impassable barriers. On
the north was the sea; on the south, the jungles where the Nile had its source; on the west was the Sahara desert. The only door of entrance was through the land of Goshen, and that was held by foreigners. No wonder, therefore, that the Egyptians became afraid. In their fear they reduced these foreigners to slavery.

Now it was in a mud hut among the slave quarters that Moses was born. He was born under the sentence of death. Every boy baby was to be destroyed. But his parents were in heart and conscience free. They were possessed of great faith. Therefore, they decided that their baby was not to be destroyed. In an effort to save him, they took a basket, lined it with pitch and prayer, and hid him among the rushes of the Nile.

They were able to keep the baby concealed for these months, but it is very hard to hide a live, healthy, baby. So after three months he was found by no less a personage than the princess herself. The beauty of the baby caused a spell over this woman, who must have had a mother's heart. Under the power of this spell she made three important decisions regarding this important child.

First, she decided that in spite of the king's decree, he should live, and not be put to death. Second, she decided to adopt him as her own son. This was an vastly important decision. It meant that he was to be one of the best trained men of his day. But most important of all, she decided to give him to his own mother to be nursed. This determined that he was to be reared in the faith of his mother instead of the faith of the land of Egypt.

It is hard to admire too much the wisdom of this slave mother. She knew that she was to possess her son only for a little while. Soon he was to go to be exposed to the temptations of the royal court. Soon he was to enter the royal universities. If he was to be true to her faith,
she must do her work quickly and well. This she did. She breathed her passion for goodness and for God into his soul so that he could never entirely forget.

Then one day when he was to manhood grown, he went out to visit his people. Here he came face to face with the ugliness of slavery. He saw an Egyptian imposing on a Hebrew slave. In hot anger he struck the bully dead and buried him in a shallow grave. Then with the realization that no one had seen him except his own people, he went back to the palace. But then when he went out the next day and sought to make peace with the Hebrews, one of them turned on him with a snarl and said, "Who made you a judge of us. Do you mean to kill me as you did the Egyptian?" At this Moses went hot and cold. Then and there he decided that he would have to give up the great dream his mother had instilled in his heart. He decided to leave the country. This he did not because he was afraid of Pharaoh, but he was afraid of his own people. He reached the conclusion that they had so rotted down in their slavery, there was nothing he could do about it. Therefore, he threw down his task and took to his heels.

Days later he showed up at the home of one Jethro, a priest of . Here he got a job as shepherd. Here on the rebound he married one of the priest's daughters, which was a sad mistake. Here for forty years he went about his task, terribly homesick at first no doubt, but by and by teaching himself to forget the wild dreams that had once throbbed in his heart. Yet all the while God was preparing him for a great destiny.

Truly, God moved in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. It was through a great wrong that Joseph came to be in Egypt. It was wrong that the Hebrews were made slaves. It was wrong for Moses to kill this Egyptian. But God overruled all these wrongs and used them to fit Moses for a task. He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him.

"Deep in unfaithful minds of never failing skill,
He treasurers up his deep designs and works His soveriegn will."
Then one morning Moses set out as usual to his task. The next morning he set out to bring his nation to its birth. How did it come about?

Moses saw a bush that seemed to be all aflame. That this bush should burn did not amaze him. That which amazed him and caused him to turn aside in awe and wonder was that the bush kept burning. Now God speaks to us through our own experiences. He could not be understood in any other way. What did God say to Moses through this burning bush? He said first, "You once burned like that. You were once all aflame with hot indignation. Once you were all aglow with enthusiasm for the freedom of your people. But now the fire has gone out. You have burned out long ago. Your candle gave one little flicker, and then blackness and darkness." Second, then this bush told him why he had burned out so quickly. Why had Moses been so easily discouraged? Why did he come to quit so quickly? It was certainly not because there was no need any longer. All the need that had challenged him was there still, but he refused to look at it any more. He had not quit anymore than you have because God did not need him and because people did not need him.

No more had he quit because there was nothing he could do about it. I know that was what he told himself. That is easy for us to tell ourselves today. Our problems are so great today. The task of keeping this world from utter self-destruction seems so important that this very fact tends to polish our hands. We feel that we can do nothing about it. But this is never the case. However big the impossibility, we can always furnish one life so true and brave and loyal that the whole situation will be helped.

Then this bush told Moses at once the secret of his failure, and of his possible victory. How did the bush keep burning? God was in it. In Bunyan's allegory a man saw a fire that burned brightly. This was the
case in spite of the fact that ever so often one would come and dash a bucket of water on the fire. At last he discovered that the fire was being fed by secret supplies of oil.

In the days of his youth Moses had gone with great self-assurance to take this task upon himself. He believed he could carry through on his own strength. But having struck one blow, courage went out of him. He gave it up and quit.

Now as God calls him saying, "Come, I will send thee to Pharaoh." all of his old self-assurance was gone.

"Who am I?" he said, "that I should go?"

"It is not a question of who you are." God answered. "It is a question of who I am. Certainly, I will be with thee."

What was the result?

1. Moses dared to make a new start.
2. Moses stayed at the task.
3. He did the impossible.
J

Deut 7:9 - Ex 3:12

Here is a burning point in a great life. There are signs more than
that there is one without which the
verse has known meaning. How have
been followed?

1. Some cases in blame and murder
   a foundation of death
2. Defect death by right parents
3. Taking - the joy of what there
4. This one foolish blame

1. Reforms of blame
2. No apportioning - see to it
   no illness of the first day. See
   am not dangerous? Hence,
3. This one foolish blame
4. Tame security
5. The change of change - old
   content - ready to go to and
and change

I. What it Came
1. God did it
2. Saw a fire - the priest burned
   no. To brave - fear can inherit
   - will wander. To keep me
   that needs God
3. What it did (1) Once on fire
   (2) Burn no longer - why? His
   God -

IV. So, What - Know
1. Give you a new pair
2. A weapon (1) a reason
   (2) an answer (3) Courage - staying
   power (4) Victory
ULVING FIRE

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Exodus 3:2

Here is an amazing story that speaks a universal language. It is equally at home in the occident as in the orient. It speaks to the busy rushing world today as it did to the more leisurely world of this far off yesterday. It is the story of the remaking of man. But for this vision, the Moses who made history on such a large scale would doubtless have gone to his grave having filled no larger place in life than that of shepherd to the flock of a Midianitish priest.

I.

This vision has an interesting background. How did Moses come to be in this out-of-the-way place? That was a question that no doubt caused much gossip among the rustics who knew Moses the shepherd. Evidently, he was vastly different from themselves. There was no mistaking his keen intelligence. They could not fail to realize something of his culture. No wonder there were wild rumors blowing about the country-side that this humble shepherd had been to the best universities of Egypt. No wonder that some whispered in an awed fashion that he had once had his foot on the very steps of Egypt's throne.
If they talked after this fashion they were guessing even better than they knew. This man had come from a past that was stranger than fiction. Born with the sentence of death against him, he had been hidden by his pious parents in a basket lined by pitch and tar. This little child had been discovered by no less personage than the Egyptian princess. The appealing beauty of this baby had so gripped her heart that she had adopted him as her own. As such, he was trained for kingship. He was destined in the mind of his adopted mother to guide the destiny of Egypt.

But, in so deciding, this princess had reckoned without the child's own mother, into whose care she had given Moses. She had forgotten that trite old saying that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world. Thus, while the princess dreamed of the service Moses was to render her people, his mother was breathing into his heart her own passion for Israel. She was preparing him to take upon himself the burdens of his own people, and to build a new nation with a shattered herd of slaves.

There is no doubt that Moses accepted this commission that came to him from God through his mother. I am quite sure that the biggest dream of his life was that of liberating his people. When he was to manhood grown, he went to visit them one day. He was eager to show himself their friend. Arrived at one of the back yards, he was brought face to face with at least one of the abuses of slavery. He saw an Egyptian task master ill treat a Hebrew. Moses lost his temper. He was made of combustible material. He was also a man of vigorous physical strength. He struck the offender one blow, but that was enough. A few muscles quivered, and then he lay still.

It was not the purpose of Moses to kill him, but now that it was done, he was not greatly horrified. He consoled himself by two definite considerations. First, he believed that this Egyptian tyrant had it coming,
he had asked for it. Then, he was further comforted by the fact that this would endear him to his people. They would see that he was their friend. Out of sheer gratitude they would keep it a secret, so that it would not come to the ears of the authorities and involve him in embarrassment. Having tossed the body into a shallow grave, he went back to the palace feeling quite content.

But when he went to pay his people a second visit something happened that left complete disillusionment. This time he found two Hebrews contending with each other. How absurd they could fight one another when they were being ground to the earth by a common enemy. Therefore, Moses took upon himself the role of peacemaker. But they did not welcome his interference in the least. Instead, one of them snarled at him. "Who made you a judge over us? Do you mean to kill us as you did the Egyptian?"

At this the heart of Moses sank within him. He saw that these men were not only slaves, but that they were in a measure content to be slaves. They not only had fetters about their ankles, but also about their souls. The sodden wretches had no appreciation of the sacrifice he was making on their behalf. In fact, the whole dream of setting them free and bring them to be a new nation seemed a sheer futility. The only sensible thing to do was to give up the whole proposition and leave the country. Thus Moses ran, not because he was afraid of the wrath of the king; his mother could have saved him from that. He fled because he had despaired of making anything out of his degenerate people.

His first appearance in the land of his adoption was also typical. One day the daughters of a certain priest of Midian got home a bit earlier than usual. When their father inquired the reason they told him this story:—When we had drawn water for our flocks, the main shepherd came to drive us
away as usual. But a broad shouldered, swarthy and husky man sprang up from nowhere. He yielded his fist with such telling effect that the shepherd had to withdraw, and we got to water our flocks first. "Where is the man?" the priest asked. At once he was sent for. He became a shepherd to this priest. And out of sheer loneliness married his daughter.

Then followed those quiet years during which Moses managed in some way to forget the great destiny of which he once dreamed and to adapt himself to the lonely life of a shepherd. Forty years have gone by now since that flight from Egypt. Those who hoped great things from him in other days have ceased to hope long ago. He, himself has settled down into a peaceful routine that has no change, nothing more exciting than the leading out of his flock in the morning, and the leading them back again at the close of the day.

"Far from the maddening crowd enabling strife,
His sober house never learned to stray,
Along the cool, sequestered vale of life,
He keeps the noiseless tomer of his way."

II.

But something happened to change this man from an obscure shepherd into the storm-center of that century. One day, he went out as usual at the head of his flock, his shepherd crook in his hand. The next day he went out alone. His shepherd crook was still in his hand. But, it was a crook that had now been dedicated to God. He was no longer a leader of a flock of sheep, he was going to invade the mighty country in the world and lead his people from bondage to freedom. He was doing this because he had heard God's call. He had seen a vision and out of that vision had come this message "Come now,
I will send thee to Pharaoh."

How did Moses come to see this vision? How was it that he was able to hear God's voice? It was not because God played favorites with him. God is always speaking, but so many of us fail to hear. He is always broadcasting, but so many refuse to tune in.

"Earth is crammed with heaven,
And every common bush aflame with God.
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
and the rest sit around and pick blackberries.

1. The first reason that Moses was able to see this vision and hear this voice was that he had not lost the child heart. He could still wonder. He could still be surprised and clap his hands in amazement. Then, therefore, he saw this bush, the fact that it was burning did not seem amazing. But the fact that it kept on burning did arouse his wonder. He said "I will turn aside and see."

2. Then Moses was not too busy to turn aside. That is often times the trouble with ourselves. Life is so strenuous; we are so hurried. Moses was out making the living himself. He might have said therefore "I would turn aside, but I am afraid I will lose some of these sheep in the process. Therefore, I will keep at my task." But Moses could still turn aside.

3. Nor was Moses so tired he could not turn aside. We are so tired today that we hardly have time for God. Not even on Sunday. Having driven ourselves desperately during the week, on Sunday we must rest by patching our threadbare clothes, doing our surplus washing, painting the garage, mending the car, playing golf or going on a picnic. God cannot speak to us because he cannot get our attention. Moses could hear, because he turned aside.

4. Then Moses could hear because he was reverent. Reverence is
"Undying Fire"

ever the gateway to knowledge. When Jesus taught us to pray, he taught us to be reverent first of all. Before we are to pray for the forgiveness of sins or for the coming of the kingdom, we are to pray this prayer "Hallowed be thy name." This is the case because we do not make our way into the secret place on flippant and irreverent feet. God still talks to us as he talked to Moses. "Take off thy shoes for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Moses could hear because he was eager and willing to turn aside and be reverent.

III.

What did Moses hear when he turned aside? Notice the content of this vision. God always speaks to us in terms of our experience. Moses walked along the back side of the desert that day, he saw a bush that was burning. When he watched to see it fall into gray ashes, it burned right on. That excited his curiosity. I will turn aside and see this great sight—why the bush is not burning. You see it is not so much the fact that the bush burned as it was it kept on that startled him. What did this bush say to him?

1. As Moses looked at it, it reminded him of himself in the old days. I used to be all aflame myself. I once was aglow with the fires of a hot enthusiasm. I blazed with indignation against wrong and with a holy zeal for right. "Once" he said, "I was like that burning bush."

2. But, a second thing, this bush said to him by contrast "You do not burn any more. Your fire has gone out. There is nothing left of all your wild dreams but disillusionment. Nothing of your hot fires but cold gray ashes. This bush can burn in spite of its frailty, but not you. You gave it up and went out almost forty long, years ago." And Moses was driven
to ask the question "How can this bush burn when I so signally failed?"

What answer could Moses give to that question?

He had not ceased to burn with indignation against the slavery of his people because they had been set free. They were still in bondage. He had not allowed his fire to go out because he was no longer needed. Neither is that true of the vision of numbers whose once glowing enthusiasm are only ashes this morning. You used to be active in the church, you are worthless now. But it is not because the victory has been won and you are not needed, you were never needed more than you are today. But in spite of this you have quit. Neither had Moses quit because he had found a better way to use life than in the service of his people. It is true that he was keeping the flocks of his father-in-law. "But how much is a man better than a sheep," said Jesus. He was doing a task that was only a poor second best. That also is true of every man that is standing aloof from the church today. You are not doing so because you have found a better way to use life, there is no better way.

Nor had Moses quit because the task was so big as to be utterly hopeless and impossible. Building a new nation out of a herd of slaves was certainly a tremendous undertaking. But it was not an impossible one. If he could not do everything toward it, he could do something toward it. Here we are trying to build a better world; here we are trying to build a better church and a better community. At times it is surely a discouraging work, but it is not impossible. You can help to do it if you have the gallantry and the grit. Moses at once flamed with a great enthusiasm for this, but not now. And Lord Morley was right when he said:

"Give me the man that was most enthusiastic in his youth."

What then had this bush that Moses did not have? The bush kept on
burning because God was in it. Moses had gone to do a great task, but he had gone in his own strength. He had gone alone. He met with the lack of appreciation. He met with stubborn human nature that is hard to change. Therefore, he gave it up and quit. All of us tend to do that unless we have God in our hearts. Through our very failures and discouragements, Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing." But here is God calling again. But when Moses reminded him of his failure saying "Who am I?" God answers the big question by saying it is not who you are, but who I am. "Certainly I will be with thee."

IV.

And what was the outcome of this vision?

1. Moses made a new start. How astonishing. This is the case for many reasons. First, he was now an old man. He do not change much after we get old. "Young men shall see visions and old men shall dream dreams." But that is only true by the grace of God. Moses was eighty, and we do not take many new starts at that age.

Then Moses was comfortable, he was well fixed. All he had to do was to go his quiet way till his father-in-law slipped into his grave. Then he would step into the old man's shoes and be well set up for life. He had economic security. Then he had tried once and failed. Why be so mad as to try again.

Yet, in spite of all these handicaps Moses renewed his youth that day by making a new beginning. The Spanish explorer was on a wrong course when he set out to Florida in search for the fountain of youth. That fountain is no more in Florida, nor in Spain, nor in Oklahoma. That fountain is in the land of beginning again. That fountain is right at your feet at this moment.

"I wish there was somewhere a wonderful place,
Called the land of beginning again,
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches,
and all our griefs might be left like an old
ragged coat at the door,
and never put on again.

And, there is such a place. It was on the back side of the Indian desert.
It is where you sit at this moment.

2. Not only did Moses make a new start through the inspiration of
this vision, but through it, he found staying power. It is not

impossible to get folks started toward the kingdom, it is harder still to keep them

going. We get discouraged and give over the fight so easy. But Moses went

back to his task to face stark impossibilities at times without number. Yet,

we read of him this bracing word "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Many criticized him and opposed him, but he endured though they broke his

heart by their indifference and open rebellion. For almost half a century,

he carried on with a dauntless courage unsurpassed.

3. Finally he decided to start again, and declaring to persist, he

made a real contribution to his own people, and to the wide world. He did

lead a herd of slaves out of Egypt. He did set them on a roadway that enabled

them to become the teachers of the world. He did help to make possible an

Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a St. Paul and a Jesus Christ.

So much he did in his day, but how about your day and mine? Today

God's call comes to you and me. Today, he is saying "Come, I will send thee
to Pharaoh." I do not know just what your Pharaoh is. I do not know just

what your task is, but this I do know, it is the part of working and not of

idling. It is the part of helping and not of hindering. It is the part of

flyinging yourself bravely into the game and not simply standing on the side-

line to criticise the players. If the candle of life has burned down to a pitiful
little inch, God wants that. He can still use it to light somebody's way.

If you are here in the springtime of life, God wants the whole of it. All of us have something to contribute. We can help build a better home-life, a better church-life, a better national-life. If we fail to do so, it is because we have stopped our ears to the call of God instead of having the gallantry and the grit to hear his call and to go in his fellowship to the building of a better world. "Come, now therefore," he said, "and I will send thee to Pharaoh."
"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

PART I.

To his neighbors and country friends, Moses must have been a rather interesting and puzzling figure. Had you seen him going out morning after morning at the head of his flock you would doubtless not have noticed any marked differences from any of the other shepherds you saw there about the countryside. But had you come into close contact with him you would have discovered a vast difference. In fact, a five minutes conversation would have been sufficient to have convinced you that there might be some truth in the wild rumors that were afloat about his remarkable boyhood, youth and youngmanhood. Certainly he seemed out of place in the role of a mere rustic whose one care was the tending of the sheep that were not his own.

It is easy to see that he was a man of marked intelligence. He is also a man of divided culture. Those who doubted that he had been educated in the best universities of the day needed only to listen to his conversation for a little while to be convinced that such was the case. In fact, this man had been born to a great destiny. There was a time when he was the very idol of his adopted mother's heart, and she was the daughter of the king of Egypt. There was a time when this humble shepherd lived in a king's palace. There was a time when this dusty sanded foot was on the very steps of the throne. There was a time when this white haired shepherd was master of one great dream— that of liberating his enslaved people.

Not only had this shepherd had his dreams but he had even at one time set about their realization. And member of the royal family
that he was he did not look with contempt on his own people. One day he had gone to visit them. Here he was brought face to face at once with one of the horrors of slavery. He saw an Egyptian task-master beating one of the Hebrew slaves. Now a hot tempered man was Moses. He was made out of most inflammable material. In the presence of this outrage he threw discretion to the winds, sieszed the first thing that came to his hands and finished the Egyptian with a single blow. He then dug a shallow grave, flung him into it and went back to the palace.

As he thought more calmly over the matter he was glad there was no Egyptian in sight. Had such been the case there might have been trouble. Of course, a number of his own countrymen witnessed the deed, but they could be depended on not to tell. There was every reason why they should keep silent. He had struck the blow for them. He was to be their deliverer. It would be as ungrateful as it was foolish should they give away his secret. Therefore, he felt a sense of security as he thought of his hasty deed.

But this feeling of security did not last for long. Another day he visited his countrymen again. This time it was not an Egyptian who was striking a Hebrew, but two Hebrews were contending with one another. Moses hurried forward to play the part of peace-maker. It seemed so foolish for two brothers to be fighting in the presence of a great and solid foe like two Egyptians. "Quit it," Moses said not without indignation. You two are brothers. But one of the men turned with a snarl and said, "Who made you a judge over us? Are you going to kill me like you did the Egyptian?"

Moses was a brave man, but at that word he went hot and cold.
Retired.

As he stood there he saw his house of dreams fall into ruins about him; for a snarl from this countryman of his was a revelation of the fact that the interference of Moses and the work that he was trying to do was in no sense appreciated. It showed that his leadership was neither acknowledged nor welcomed. It showed also that these slaves were not only slaves in body, but slaves in soul. They did not want to be free. He saw that they were foolish enough and ungrateful enough to report his deed to the first Egyptian that came along.

What was the outcome? As Moses went back to the palace that day he said to himself, "Well if they don't want my help they don't have to have it. If they are so content to be in slavery why in slavery they can remain. I certainly cannot set them free if they do not wish to be free. Besides when the report reaches the king that I have killed one of his subjects that may mean trouble for me. The easiest way out of this business is for me just to take my letter out of the church and retire to some sheltered spot and let these Egyptians and Hebrews fight it out together."

Thus Moses had left Egypt and had gone into the desert of Midian. He had to give up the splendor of the court life and the culture of the city for life among a bunch of rustics. To show how crude they were, we have only to look at this picture. The daughters of Jethro had just drawn water for their flocks when other shepherds who were men came up and drove them away to let their flocks drink water. Moses could not keep still. Again he lost his temper. But the daughters of Jethro did not have to draw any more water.

This caused them to get home earlier than usual. When their father asked for the cause, they told him that as they were preparing
Retired.

to water their flocks that the shepherds interfered as usual, but that a travel-stained stranger took their part with the result that they got the benefit of the water they had drawn. "Why didn't you invite him home with you," asked the old priest?" And a runner is dispatched for this stranger. He comes and is so dead lonesome that he marries one of Jethro's daughters. That was about the most foolish thing that Moses ever did.

The days that followed were days not without bitterness and disappointment. It was hard for Moses to give up his dream. It was hard for him to feel at home among these heathens. The name that he gives his first born signifies that. He gives him the name that "I am a stranger in a strange land." But after a while he came to feel at home. He settled down into a snug contentment. He is well fixed now. He has no flocks of his own, but will soon inherit those of his father-in-law and thus he will go placidly on to the end.

"Far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife,"
His sober wishes never learned to stray,
Along the coal sequestered veil of life,
He keeps the noiseless tenor of his way."

What is wrong with Moses? The same that is wrong with many thousands today. Some of them have forsaken the Church to give themselves to positive wrong. But many more have simply quit. They are not doing anything wrong especially, they have just retired. "Uh yes," they say, "I used to be in my place at prayer meeting and Sunday School and preaching service almost every time. I taught a class. But I moved to town and I thought I would rest a while so I have left my letter down at Bat Roost. My husband's step-aunt's son-in-law is buried down there and a lot of silliness is attached to the old place.

PART II.

But Moses came back. That is surprising for many reasons.
Retired

It is especially surprising because he is old and well fixed. Then he had tried once and failed. But in spite of all hindrances, Moses made a new start and ended in achieving God's purpose for his life. How did this come about? Here is a strange story. This seemingly contented shepherd went out one morning with his flocks just as he had done every morning for nearly forty years. The next day he got up to take his staff and bring about the birth of a new nation. He set out to become the storm-center of the century. He set out to become the law-giver and prophet to his people and to the wide world. How, I repeat, did it come about. God spoke to him in this burning bush. But for this experience the Moses we know would have never existed. But for this experience the greatest man of the Old Testament would have gone to his grave having filled no larger vocation than that of sheep keeping for a Midianitical priest.

Yes, God spoke to Moses thru this bush. And be it said of Moses that he was still capable of hearing the voice of God. God is always speaking to us. He speaks to us every day. One trouble with us is that we do not hear. Moses could still hear. This was true because he had not lost his sense of wonder. He still had a bit of the child in his heart. His curiosity was not dead.

Then God could speak to Moses because he was not too absorbed in things to hear His voice. "I will now turn aside," said Moses, "and see this great sight." The tendency of the rush of our modern world is to so drink up our energies that we have no time to turn aside. In the mad rush to make a living, we lose the secret of life. We forget to turn aside to the place of prayer. We forget to turn aside for the study of God's word. Moses said I will now turn aside.
Finally Moses was reverent. God cannot speak to many of us because we are so irreverent. Reverence is the gateway to knowledge. It is not for nothing that Jesus taught us to pray for reverence above all else. And before we ask for the forgiveness of sin, before we ask for the daily bread, before we ask for the incoming of His Kingdom, He tells us to pray; "Hallowed be Thy name."

2. Not only did God speak to Moses but He so spoke as to compel him to realize that he had faith. What was it in this bush to do that? Moses was not surprised that the bush burned. Any old dead bush can burn. The thing that made Moses wonder was that it kept on. He looked to see it fall into ashes almost instantly. But such was not the case. It continued to burn. And as Moses looked at it he said to himself. I was once on fire but I have gone out. I was once hot hearted but my enthusiasm is all dead.

2. Then in this bush God not only reminded Moses that his fire had gone out and that he had quit his job but he showed him why he had quit. "Moses, didn't you used to be interested in the freedom of Israel?" "Oh yes," he answered, "it was the one ambition of my life." "Are you still working at it?" "No I quit long ago." "Well, why did you quit?" Why did he?

First, it was not because he was no longer needed. It was not because Israel had won her freedom. You who have lost your interest in the Kingdom of God, why have you quit it? It is not because wrong has been dethroned and right has been enthroned. It is not because life has no need for you. Never was the need greater and you are doing nothing. Therefore, it is not because there is no need that you do anything.
Retired.

Second, neither had Moses quit because the folks whom he tried to save did not appreciate him. They made his quitting easy. It is always hard to carry on in an atmosphere that is chilled by a lack of appreciation. The people for whom Moses struck his one blow did not appreciate it. But that was not a sufficient reason for quitting. He had no right to be disloyal to God because of the ingratitude of men.

Third, neither did Moses quit because the task that he had undertaken was difficult to the point of seeming impossible. Getting Israel out of Egypt into Canaan is a hard job. It was so then. It is today. There are people like the poor prisoner in the Bastile who do not seem to want to be free. Yet the task to which God calls us is possible. We can, if we will, save some. And that is our solemn duty and responsibility.

Why really did Moses quit? He lacked what the bush had. Even a frail little thorn bush could burn when it had God in it. And the frailest and weakest human soul can do so. It is easy to burn for a while, but if you keep on burning the fire must be rekindled by the presence of God. There are always those who are ready to throw water on the fires of your enthusiasm. If they are kept burning they must, as in Bunyan’s immortal story, be fed from secret sources.

4. Then God gave Moses a new trial. Let us never cease to thank God for the second trial. "Come now, I will send thee to Pharaoh." The task for which you failed several years ago you may still accomplish. But Moses is not quite convinced. "Who am I?" "It is not what you are that counts," is the reply. "Certainly I will be with thee." "And when they ask you who sent you say, 'I Am". 
PART III.

What was the outcome?

1. Moses was obedient to his heavenly vision. It is one of the most amazing scenes of history. He is an old man now eighty years of age. He is marching on the greatest nation in the then world. All he has is a staff in his hand and God in his heart. But he goes on his way with absolute assurance.

2. The task that is ahead of him has difficulties innumerable. Nobody will ever know but Moses and the God of Moses what burdens he had to carry and what hindrances he had to overcome. But we read about him this fine sentence. "He endured." The king opposed him but "he endured." His friends misunderstood him but "he endured." His people were still quarrelsome and given to endless fault-finding, but "he endured."

3. The final out-come was that he won. He led his nation from bondage to freedom. In so doing he gave to the world a Isaiah and a Jeremiah. He gave to the world a Daniel and a Hosea. In so doing he gave to the world Jesus Christ, the saviour of man.

Have you quit? Have you lost heart? Has the fire gone out? God is ready to rekindle you and start you anew. "Come now," he says "and I will send you to Pharaoh." I do not know what your Pharaoh is but I do know that you have one. It may be here or yonder, but if you are willing to go God is ready to send you. And as you go in His fellowship you may meet many fortunes, but not that of defeat.
"I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burning."

Exodus 3:2

Here is a story coming to us out of the long gone past. It wears a queer garb and seems to speak in a strange tongue. But such in reality is not the case. It is as up-to-date as the latest news cast. It tells of a crisis in the life of the greatest man of the Old Testament. He is one of the greatest men of all time. He made history on a grand scale. He influenced his own generation, but his influence upon subsequent generations has been as sunlight to starlight in comparison with what he did in his own time. He has brought every civilized nation into his debt. Yet, without this queer experience, the Moses we know would never have lived. The Moses that has changed the world would have gone to his grave having filled no larger place than shepherd of another man's sheep.

This experience has an interesting background. Moses, as you know, was born a slave. Not only so, but he was born under the sentence of death. But his pious parents felt that God was greater than even the might of Egypt, therefore they refused to give up their beautiful child without a struggle. They took a basket and lined it with pitch and prayer, put Moses therein and hid him among the rushes upon the waters of the Nile.
By and by their secret came out. It is hard to hide a live baby. Moses was discovered by no lesser personage than the Princess of Egypt. It would seem that this princess had no children of her own. I doubt if we have ever done her the credit that was due her. She made three momentous decisions that day. She decided that the child should live, that she would adopt him as her own, she also decided upon his own mother for his nurse.

Had she realized what she was doing I feel sure this last choice would never have been made. As this baby grew toward manhood his foster mother had great dreams for him. She saw that he was gifted to the point of genius. She was sure that he would be the greatest king that Egypt had ever had. But there was another woman whose influence upon Moses was greater than her own. That was the woman who gave him birth. She also was dreaming great dreams for her son. She trained him for a day when he could give his enslaved people a chance. It was this enslaved mother that won. She got the first chance at Moses. There is still abiding truth in the old proverb, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." When Moses had come to manhood he took a keen interest in his enslaved people. One day he went out to the brickyards where the slaves were working. Here he was brought face to face with one of the abuses of their bondage. He saw an Egyptian impose upon a Hebrew. Now Moses became a man of great self-control, but at first he was made of the most inflammable material where he gave way to burning anger. He was a strong, husky man, seeing the first thing that came to his hand he struck the Egyptian one blow. Doubtless he did not intend to kill him, but one blow was enough. His muscles quivered a bit then grew still. Moses had him thrown into a shallow grave, then dusted off his hands and went back to the palace saying, "He ask for it."

It is evident that Moses was not greatly disturbed over what he had done. He was not afraid of the authorities for one reason because of his foster mother. Then he was not afraid because he was sure that his fellow Hebrews would understand
that the blow was struck in their behalf. Their own self-interest would lead them to keep silent. Therefore Moses went back to the palace feeling that he had taken his first step toward delivering his people.

A few days later he went out for another visit. This time he saw one Hebrew imposing upon another. This made Moses almost as indignant as he was at the sight of an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew. It seemed so stupid that these Jews should be fighting each other in the face of a common danger. Certainly they ought to have sense enough to make a common cause against a common foe. "Stop it," Moses said angrily, "you are brethren." Then one of the fighters turned on him with a snarl. "Do you mean to kill me as you did that Egyptian the other day?"

At that word Moses went hot and cold. It was not fear that gripped him, it was a sense of hopelessness and despair. It came to him that these countrymen of his did not even desire freedom. They were not only slaves in body, but in soul as well. To undertake to deliver such would be sheer futility. It would only mean endless conflict for nothing. Therefore, he decided to take his letter out of the church, to give up all his wild dreams and leave his unappreciative fellows to look out for themselves.

That very day he made his getaway. At last he came to the Desert of Midian where he thought he would be safe. His entrance into this new land was typical. There was a certain priest there who had a large family of daughters. These girls had to tend their father's flocks. One day they came home a bit early. "Why so early?" the father questioned? "When we had drawn water for our flocks there was a masculine came to drive us away as was their custom. A swarthy and husky man from nowhere came up and took our part. He used his fist to such a good purpose that we got to water our flocks first. "Where is the man?" Jethro asked. "We left him at the well." At once a runner is dispatched to bring Moses. He became first a guest and then a son-in-law to this Midianitish priest.
It is evident that Moses' first months here were full of bitterness and
dissolutionment. He was a man of culture. He had been educated at the best
universities of Egypt. But here he was among ruffians. He had been trained
in the religion of his people, here he was among pagans. He carried the daugh-
ter of Jethro on the rebound because he was so desperately lonely. He gave his
first born a name that signifies, "I have been a stranger in a strange land."
But by and by he gave up all his mad dreams and settled down to the restful
routine of shepherd. So we find him at the opening of our story:

"Far from the madding crowds ignoble strife
His sober wishes never learned to stray,
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
He kept the noisless tenor of his way."

II.

Then something happened that caused life for him to take on a new departure.
One day he went out as the leader of a flock of sheep. The next day he set out
with nothing but a staff in his hand to be the chief actor in the birth of a nation.
How do we account for this? It is not what we should have expected. Moses is now
an old man, then, too, he is well fixed, he is comfortable. Yet, in spite of this
he reviewed his youth and made a new start. How, I repeat, did it happen?

The answer is this,-"The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of
fire in the midst of a bush. He looked and beheld the bush burned with fire and
the bush was not consumed. And he said I will now turn aside and see this great
sight why the bush is not burned." It was through this experience that Moses heard
God's voice. God is always speaking. He speaks to us today just as real as he
spoke to Moses in the long ago. But the trouble with us is that many of us do
not hear in because we refuse to listen.

"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush aflame with God

But only he who sees takes off his shoes,

The rest sit around and pick blackberries.”

When God spoke Moses was able to hear. This was the case for the following reasons.

1. Moses had not lost the child heart. He was still curious. He could still be made to wonder. When we cease to be curious, when we become childish rather than child-like, then we cease either to see or to hear. The bush that burned and was not consumed excited Moses’ curiosity. He was eager to learn its secret.

2. He was so eager to learn it that he took time to turn aside. Moses was a shepherd, but he led the sheep and did not let the sheep lead him. Many a man becomes the slave of his own business. "Everything he touches turns to gold," said a man admiringly of one of his friends. But I could not get enthused over it. I had a suspicion that amounted to an almost tragic certainty that while what he touched turned to gold he himself was turning to mud. Moses could still take time to turn aside. Some of us are too hard-driven, too much the bondslave of things to do that.

3. Finally, Moses was reverent. Reverence is the aristocrat among the virtues. It is the open pathway to knowledge. It was not for nothing that when Jesus taught us to pray he put the prayer for reverence first. Before we are to pray for the forgiveness of sins, before we are to pray for the coming of the Kingdom, we are to pray, "Hallowed be thy name.” That is first because it belongs first. It is the door of entrance into the audience chamber of the King. We do not make our way into the secret place of the most high on flippant and irreverent feet. If you have no reverence for God you will never hear his voice. Moses was reverent.

III.

What did God say to Moses through this burning bush? God always speaks to
us in terms of our own experiences. We could not understand if he were to use any other method. Here was a little bush dry and parched. It ought to have burned and fallen into gray ashes in a single moment, but it kept on burning. That was what stirred Moses' wonder. He was not amazed that it should burn, he was amazed that it should keep on burning. What did it say to him?

1. It reminded him of his own yesterdays. As he looked at that bush he said to himself, "I was once all aflame. Hot enthusiasm once blazed on the altar of my heart. Once I could not endure the wrongs and injustices that were being suffered by my people. But my fire has gone out long ago. It has died down to dull, gray ashes. The thing that once filled me with a holy indignation I tolerate now. The wrong that I once vowed to change into right I have now decided can never be changed.

There are many like Moses today. Once we were full of hope and enthusiasm. Once we were in the thick of the fight. Once we dreamed that right might be forever on the scaffold but we could set it on the throne. But life has tamed us. We meet opposition. We do not find the admiration that we expected. Failure has dashed buckets of cold water on our enthusiasm. We gave it up and quit. "For the wettest of wet blankets," said Lord Horley, "give me the man that is most enthusiastic in his youth." "We begin all enthusiasm," Emerson tells us, "but by and by we take on the most gentle and asinine expressions." This burning bush told Moses that he had once burned, but that he was not burning anymore.

2. Then this bush spoke to Moses of the cause of his failure. "Moses you were all aflame yesterday. You were full of determination to set your people free. Why did you quit?" It was not because you accomplished your purpose. It was not because slavery is any less an evil today than it was when you grew hot and indignant yesterday. You did not quit because you saw that you were no longer needed. You did not quit because you had given absolutely all you had to the task.
stripped one blow, met one disappointment, then chucked the whole enterprise and quit. Why did you do it? In other words, what has this little bush that you do not have?"

You know the answer to that question. The bush kept burning not because of what it was in itself, it kept burning because God was in it. Moses had run out of power. I was out driving sometime ago and ran out of gasoline. My car did not stop instantly, it had enough momentum to keep it running a few yards. But by and by it quit. We can go for a time under our own steam, but, for staying power we need God. He is saying to us what Jesus said to his friends, what God said to Moses, "Apart from me ye can do nothing."

But Moses is now an old man eighty years of age. He is remembering the paralyzing failure of forty years ago. "If I failed then, surely I cannot hope to succeed now. Who am I that I should lead the children of Israel out of bondage?" he asked. "It is not a question of who you are," comes the answer, "it is a question of who God is." It is said that Mohammed had a certain general who won every battle. By and by Mohammed asked this victorious leader to show him his sword. "You must have a wonderful sword," he said, "in order to be always victorious." But when Mohammed looked at the sword, he said, "It is like any other sword." Then came the answer, "It is not the sword that counts, it is the arm that wields it and the heart that backs up the arm." So God spoke to Moses, so he speaks to you and me.

IV.

What was the result?

1. Moses dared to make a new start. That is most amazing. All who had in other years expected great things from Moses had long since given up hope. He promised much, but he gave little. If he failed in the prime of his young manhood he certainly will never do anything now that he is old. After all he
didn't have the stuff of which heroes are made. "Just for a handful of silver he left us, just for a ribbon to stick in his coat." But after almost a half century of failure he renewed his youth and began again. The old French Explorer came to Florida in search of a fountain of youth. How silly. That fountain is at your feet and mine. It comes from living our best today in order to make a better tomorrow. Moses at the age of eighty started again.

2. Not only did he start, but he kept on. It is hard to get some people started, but it is still harder to keep them going. Our lives are cluttered up with half finished tasks, beautiful dreams that were altogether possible but never did come true. We get just on the point of realization, but never learn to follow through. But when the writer to the Hebrews sought for the outstanding characteristic in this greatest of men, it was a certain steadfastness and hearted capacity to keep on. "He endured," he said, "as seeing him who is forever." Forty years ago he gave up at the first blow of opposition now he lived in a continuous stream of opposition, but never swerved. He kept steadily at his task till he reached his journey's end. There is nothing finer than that.

3. Finally, though he got a late start, because he caught in his sails the winds of almighty God he accomplished the impossible. He led a horde of whining, complaining slaves toward national greatness. He made possible every word of this Holy Book. He made possible that amazing flock of skylarks that still sing through the lips of the Psalms. He made possible that immortal company whose like have not been found in any nation, the Great Prophets. He made possible Jesus Christ with his conquering cross. Then his best years seemed to lie behind him at the call of God he made a new start and made something of infinite worth out of a life that seemed all but ended.

And now we come from his distant day to our day. "Come now," said God to Moses, "I will send thee to Pharoah." The emphasis here is on the man. Now God is ready to send you and me. I do not know just where your Pharoah is. The chances
are that he is at your very side. He is in your home. He is in your church.
He is in your city. Regardless of what yesterday has been, tomorrow may be a day
in which in the fellowship of God you will go forth to victory. It may be that
life's candle has almost gone out. All that God asks for is that last half inch.
"Come and I will send thee." Out from his presence in the next moment you may go
with a sense of defeat and futility. You may also go with a sense of the under-
girding of the Everlasting Arm. God is yours for the taking. That will your
answer be?
LIFE BEGINS AT EIGHTY

Exodus 3:10 – Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people.

Here is a scene that took place in distant Midian many centuries ago. An old shepherd is going out in front of his flock. He is a rather striking figure of a man. But had I said to one of the ancient rustics standing by, "Who is that old chap?" He would have answered, "He is just a shepherd. His one distinction is that he is son-in-law to our leading citizen, Jetano." "Well," I replied, "I should have expected to find such a man filling a higher place".

"Yes, naturally," he answered. "When he came here years ago he created quite a stir. Rumor had it that he had known better days. Some prophesied that he even yet had a great future. But nothing came of it. For forty years now he has done nothing but shepherd another man's sheep. That is all he will ever do since he is now at least eighty years old."

Yet, had I been by with the power of foreknowledge, I should have said, "You are dead wrong. That old man is going out in front of his flock today, will tomorrow be leading another flock with nothing but a shepherd's crook in his hand and God in his heart he will be going to invade mighty Egypt and bring a new nation to its birth."

"Not on your life," my rustic answered. "Somebody may set the children of Israel free, but you can take it from me it will not be this old shepherd whose best days have long ago dropped into the sunset." That this rustic had reason on his side, we all must agree. Moses had at least three counts against him.
Soon his Father-in-law will be gone and he will step in to his shoes. He had everything to make him feel secure. Having found security, he had attained a measure of contentment. I do not mean to say that there was never a moment in the life of this mighty man when he was not a bit dissatisfied. A thousand times as he thought upon his yesterdays he had known restless agony. He was still haunted at times by the realization of the degradation of his people. But he had hushed the voice of conscience so many times that it had become so nearly silent as not to bother him much. And he could sing with more pathos than humor:

"I think my soul is a tame old duck,
Paddling around in barnyard muck;
Fat and lazy with useless wings;
But sometimes when the north wind stings,
And the wild ones hurtle overhead,
It remembers something lost and dead,
And cocks a wary and bewildered eye,
And makes a feeble attempt to fly.
He's fairly content with the state he's in,
But he isn't the duck he might have been."

Even so, the chances of his ever changing are slim indeed.

3. But the biggest reason that we expect nothing from Moses, is that he is not only old and secure, but he is an old failure. The very enterprise to which he is now being called was one that he had fumbled miserably in the springtime of his years. Lord Morely was right when he said, "For the
Life Begins at Eighty

wettest of wet blankets, give me the man who was most enthusiast.
iastic in his youth. There was a time when Moses was an

exciting personality. It was true from the very day of his

birth. The story says that "he was a proper child." I heard a

great Greek scholar say that "proper child" meant "citified".

They saw that he was a citified child. At once they began to
dream great dreams for him. They began to believe that Almighty

God had a plan and purpose in his life. Therefore, at the risk

of their own lives, they took a basket, lined it with pitch

and prayer and hid him among the rushes.

A little later he was found by the Egyptian princess. As

she held this baby in her arms she made a threefold decision

(1) That this baby should not be put to death. (2) That she

would adopt him as her own, thus guaranteeing that he would be

exposed to the best cultural opportunities of that day.

(3) Finally she chose his mother for his nurse. That guaranteed

his faith, his character. "Moses, when he was born, was

hidden three months by his parents. That was the faith of his

parents. Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be

called "The Son of Pharaoh's daughter." That was the faith

that he had inherited from his consecrated parents."

When the days came for him to go to live in the palace

and one day the best whatever came, he

he went undergirded by this faith. A little later, when he

went out to see how his brothers were getting on, he saw an

Egyptian bully lording it over one of his own people—In a

high rage he struck him dead. I do not think he intended to

kill him, but having done so he was not greatly distressed.
Indeed he felt that he had taken the first step toward the emancipation of his people. He would now be a popular hero. But when he came the next day, and found two Hebrews contending with each other, and sought to be a peacemaker, one of them turned on him with a snarl and said, "Who made you a judge over us! Do you mean to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?"

That was a revelation to Moses. It showed that his secret was no longer a secret. It showed also that this miserable Hebrew for whom he had sacrificed had no appreciation for what he had done, that in his ingratitude he was ready to expose him to the first Egyptian task master that came along. That did it! "You don't want to be free," he raged inwardly. "You have no appreciation. I can not give you what you refuse to take." He therefore threw down the task and took to his heels, buried himself in Midian where for forty years he had sought to convince himself that his failure was in no sense the fault of himself.

PART II

Now it was this man who brought emancipation to the people of Israel. How did it come about? Of course the first move was on the part of God. One day Moses looked up from his task and saw on the mountainside a little thorn bush all ablaze. It did not greatly interest him. He knew that in a moment it would fall in gray ashes. But by and by when he looked again the bush was still burning. That did interest him and he
said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt, that is, how does it continue to blaze. It was through this that God brought home his message to Moses. What did this burning bush say?

First it said: "You once burned like that. Once you were all ablaze against wrong and all aflame with enthusiasm for right. You said things are not what they ought to be, and I am here by the grace of God and the power of God to make that what is into what ought to be. And you were sure that you could do something about it, that you could right the wrong. But the fire that once blazed has now died down to gray ashes."

How often that happens! (We know people who once were all enthusiasm, but on the altar of whose hearts the fire has gone out. There are few sadder losses than that.) I was in a meeting of pastors some time ago where a young chap with radiance told how God had just used him. The president of the meeting, whom I knew well, a man of ability, a dry and thoroughgoing ecclesiastic, listened to this young fellow, with a solid face. But by and by that old rock-ribbed ecclesiastic put his face in his hands and sobbed like a desolate child. He never said a word. I don't know why he wept, but I could guess. Once he had been a flaming evangelist. But the fire had largely gone out. He was still carrying on, but he was carrying on, as so many others, with a cold heart.

2. A second something this bush said to Moses was this, "Since your fire's gone out, why did it go out? It was not the fault of God, it was not the fault of the impossible
"Who am I?", and God said, "It is not a question of who you are. It is a question of who I am." It is not a question of your age or of your past failures. Put yourself in My hands today and I will take care of your yesterday and fit you for tomorrow."

(Even the youth shall faint and be weary
The young men shall utterly fall
But they that wait upon the Lord
Shall renew their strength.
They shall mount up with wings
As eagles
They shall run and not be weary
They shall walk and not faint."

So Moses took God at His word, and went down with nothing but a staff in his hand and the God in his heart, to invade the greatest nation on the face of the earth. And not only so, but he won.

Why did he win? Not because it was easy. He met every form of opposition. He met the stern opposition of the powers that be. Pharaoh was a despot and did everything that he could to balk the wild dream of Moses. But his greatest opposition was not from the enemy, but from his friends. It was the Children of Israel themselves who proved to be the biggest obstruction. They were a most cantankerous bunch of cry babies that you could find anywhere. How did Moses win?

Nothing could make him quit. "He endured." People opposed him, but he endured. They said "you can never do it", but he
endured. They criticized him, but he endured. They broke his heart with their ingratitude, but he endured. If a man will just endure in the kingdom of God, nothing can defeat him. Not all the powers of hell! But if he fails to endure, nothing can bring victory.

And now we come back from that distant land to our own. How about you? God is saying to you and me "Come! I will send you to Pharaoh." Where is your Pharaoh? Lift up your eyes. Pharaohs are far more numerous today than in the long ago. Never was there a greater need for deliverers. Where is your Pharaoh? It may be the ministry. It may be the mission field. The chances are it is your own city, your own church, your own home. You say yes to God and he will accept, remake and use you to bring to your day a new freedom.
He was to be their champion. With this in mind, he struck an angry blow one day in their defense. He was quite sure that having killed this one Egyptian, his people would rally to him and give him their love and loyalty.

When, therefore, on another day one of his own brethren turned upon him with the snarling question, "Do you mean to kill me as you did that Egyptian?" he was utterly disillusioned. "You fool," he must have said in his heart, "you miserable ingrate. You have no appreciation of what I am undertaking to do for you. You are not only a slave in body, but in mind and heart. You would likely betray me to the first Egyptian task-master that comes along. You and your kind are not worth fighting for. I refuse to waste further time with you." Thus he took to his heels, not because he was afraid of the wrath of the king, but of the stolid stupidity of his own people.

Naturally, he missed the exciting life of his youth; he missed the culture of the court. This comes out in the name he gave his first born, a name that signifies "I have been a stranger in a strange land." But, little by little, the fact that he had been upon the border of life and death, little by little, he put his soul to sleep. When his burnt-out dreams tried to rise from their gray ashes and say, "What about your people? Aren't they still in slavery?" he learned to answer, "Yes, but I tried once and they didn't want to be free. They are still in slavery, but it is no fault of mine."

Now, it was this man on the altar of whose heart the fires had long gone out, who set out one day to invade and to bring a nation to its birth. Not only so, but he did just that. He made history on a colossal scale. He made possible to the world the great prophets of Israel. He even prepared the way for Jesus himself. How did it come about? There is only one explanation. God had called him. Therefore, he who had fled
before the face of his first difficulty met numberless and far greater difficulties without flinching. In fact, he came to endure, "seeing him who is invisible."

When we turn to the new testament we find the call of God equally real, though less dramatic. Here is a man whom Jesus greatly admired. He was a man so great in moral stature that those who knew him best could not account for him except in terms of God. Therefore, one wrote of him: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John."

Then here is another young man that towers above John as a mountain above a molehill. This young man stood up one day in his village church to read the lesson of the morning. He found the place where a certain word was written. He found it because he was searching for it. He took the ancient word and brought it up to date. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach." Here is Jesus' assertion of his divine call. How significant it is that God called his only begotten Son to the task of preaching.

As God called Jesus, so Jesus called others. This is his own word: "As the Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you." He sends us on the same mission. He sends us backed up by the same resources.

One day he found four men down by the lakeside. These were men who had made no great impression upon the world of their day. They had no great expectations for themselves, nor did anybody have great expectations for them except the Christ who called them. "Follow me", he said, "and I will make you to become fishers of men." As they obeyed his call, they helped to change the world.

As he called men in the days of his flesh, so he called them after his ascension. One day he met Saul of Tarsus, the greatest menace of the
early church, and made him into its greatest minister. Here is his call, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." It was because of this call and through his response to it that Paul went out to turn the world upside down. To this day he breathes upon our world like a reviving Gulf stream.

Now, it is easy to believe in the truth of these stories of God's call recorded in the Bible, because such calls have been repeated throughout the history of the church. In fact, it is these called men who have made the history of the church what it is. If God called men yesterday, so he calls them today. What God did, he does. Thus we find today honest and sincere men who can say humbly and yet gladly, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach." There are those even now who can look up from their task as they speak for God, and affirm "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."

II

Now, agreeing that God does call men into the work of the ministry, how does he call them?

It is well to bear in mind that he does not call all his ministers in the same way. This need not surprise us in the light of the fact that those whom he calls differ so widely from one another. It is at once amazing and thrilling what varied types God calls into his ministry. Truly his thoughts in this matter are not our thoughts, nor his ways, our ways.

Of course, it is easy to understand why he calls certain great personalities. We can understand why he would call Isaiah, who belonged to the nobility, who was at home in the king's palace, who had ability amounting almost to genius. But he does not limit his call to the man of vast gifts.
He calls those who are mediocre. He sometimes calls those who seem to us to be even below average. Surely he is a God of vast variety in his choice as in all else. Had I been making the world I would perhaps have made all the flowers giant sunflowers, but our God has a place for violets.

The call of a Philip Brooks is understandable, but how strange that God should call a cowboy, totally without formal education. Why he should call this man who stammered so that had you met him at the forks of the road and asked him the name of the town to which the right hand fork led, after he had gesticulated and sputtered for ten minutes, you would have answered, "Thank you, I will just guess at it." He used bad English and continued to do to the end of the chapter. When he told us of his call to preach, we did not know whether to laugh or cry. Therefore, we did both. I should certainly never have called him, yet God did. We need no better proof than the fact that this man won thousands into the fellowship of his Lord and helped prepare almost a hundred young men for the ministry.

Then, if God's calls are varied, so is his way of converting us equally varied. If you have come to religious certainty, it is often difficult for you to believe that your neighbor has found the same certainty unless he has traveled exactly the same road that you traveled. But we are not all converted alike. When I was a boy on the farm my father gave me a little colt. He gave me that colt the very day that it was born. I at once began to get on good terms with that colt. I would rub its nose and stroke its ears. Now and then I would give it an apple core, if I could spare it. At times I would lean my weight on him to see if he could hold me up. Then one day, in a moment of reck-
less daring, I climbed on his back for a ride. Believe it or not, he never did throw me. He never did kick me. And if you had asked him three years later "When were you converted into a work horse?" he would have answered, "My master and I have always been on good terms."

But there was another colt the same age as mine. He did not belong to anybody in particular, he just belonged to my father. Therefore, nobody ever paid him any special attention. Nobody ever rubbed his nose or gave him an apple core. When he was three years of age my father said, "Now he is old enough to be converted into a work horse." But his conversion was an ordeal indeed. If you had asked him three years later "When were you converted?" he would have said, "I will never forget, I bear the scars of it to this day." But I submit to you that my pony was converted in a far more normal and far more natural way than the other.

I have read somewhere that in the tropics there is a flower that when it blooms makes a report like the firing of a revolver. Were you riding through the forest you would say, "A flower opened just now. But that is not the way the flowers bloom in my garden. One evening there is a bud. Then the night baptizes that bud with dew. The next morning the sun kisses away the dew and a new rose is born. But not even the bee who was gathering honey in the rose at its side heard the slightest sound. We are not all converted alike. Even so, we are not all called into the ministry alike.

There are those to whom God seems to speak in tones of thunder. The prophet Amos had such a call. "The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" Paul had such a call, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Such calls have come to others through the centuries. Upon some God lays a mighty
and compelling hand. But there are others to whom God's call comes as a mere whisper. At times it is a whisper so vague that the one hearing it may go for months, even for years, without being certain that there has been any voice at all. God speaks in varied tones and by varied voices.

At times he calls through a vision of need. When Isaiah had passed through his transforming experience it came over him as an all-but-irresistible urge to share his experiences with his needy fellows. Knowing that his own lips had been touched by a live coal from off God's altar, and believing that he might be used to bring the same cleansing to theirs, he said, "Here I am, Lord, send me." God is calling us today through the voice of a need that can only be met by the proclamation of that one name under heaven whereby men must be saved.

Then God calls most frequently through human voices. If we were to take from the mission field and from our pulpits today all those who came out of un-Christian homes, I dare say they would not be very greatly missed. But if we were to take from these fields those who are the product of homes vitally Christian, the missionary field would be largely deserted and the pulpit would be largely silent.

Many of those in the ministry today have known that they were going to preach since childhood. While this is not my own experience, yet it is true that my first wistful look at the ministry came through the influence of my consecrated parents. It came through what they were. It came also through the special honor that I knew they gave to God's minister. Early it came to me to say in my boyish heart, "I would like to be the kind of man that my father and mother could honor as they honor our minister."

Then God calls ministers through the guidance of some wise Christian
friend. I owe a great debt to such a friend. After I had turned my back upon
the ministry as a call too high for me, this man encouraged me to believe that God
could use me in this field. Then he asked me to give a summary of the lesson
each Sunday morning to the entire church school. It was this first attempt at
preaching ten minute sermons that gave me hope that God might enable me to
preach.

My call, therefore, as that of many others, was not in thunder tones. It
came through human voices. It came most of all through a conviction, very vague
at times, clear at others, that even if I entered another calling and succeed­
ed, I would never feel that I had really arrived. Therefore, I dared one day
to turn aside from the profession for which I had been trained to apply for
license to preach, making this my prayer, "Lord, I believe, help me my unbelief."

III

Why does God thus call men into his ministry? There are many reasons.
I am going to mention two.

1. He calls certain men to be his spokesman because knowing them and
the world of which they are a part, he knows that they can do something for
him that no one else can do. It is an awe-inspiring and yet thrilling thought
that God has selected you for this high task in the conviction that you can do
this thing that is essential to the salvation of men. No wonder Paul could
never think of his call without a shout of sheer joy. "To me," he sings, "is
this grace given that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ."

2. Not only does God call us because he needs us, but because of our
deep need of him. It is important to be sure of our call before we dare to take
upon ourselves a work so high as that of minister. When those of our day turn
upon us as one did upon Moses and say, "Who sent you on this mission?" God help
us if we do not have an answer that is at least satisfactory to ourselves. It
was this sense of mission that steadied Jesus. "He that sent me is with you. The Father hath not left me alone." Such a sense of mission is needed by the minister of today. Whenever our Lord sends us upon a mission, he not only goes with us but he goes ahead of us. That we have all experienced who have seriously undertaken to do his work. Just as long as this call remains vital and real, almost no difficulty can daunt us. Whenever our knees grow weak, whenever we lapse into a mere ecclesiastic, whenever he keeps at his task because he can make a living in no other way, it is usually because he has lost his sense of mission.

Sometimes this conviction of a call will steady us even in the face of moral failure. In the "Scarlet Letter" there is an impressive scene that takes place between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne. These two, you remember, had an illicit love. Everybody knew Hester's guilt; she had given birth to a baby, Pearl, she called her, because she had bought her at great price — at the price of a mother's only treasure. But nobody suspected the partner in her sin, the brilliant young minister with so great a reputation for holiness.

Now, being a sensitive soul, this minister found the double life he was living utter torture. Day by day he suffered the pangs of hell. The woman who loved him, seeing his agony, urged him to resign his pulpit, to lose himself among the savages in the wilds of the forest and to forget it all. Naturally, he feels the appeal of such an escape, yet he refuses to run. Here is his answer: "I dare not quit my post, though I am an unfaithful sentinel whose sure reward is dishonor and death when his weary watch shall have come to an end."

I can speak here a word out of my own experience. Soon after I had been licensed to preach, I went in early summer to a western state to supply a circuit with the intention of joining that conference that coming autumn. The circuit to which I went had fallen on evil days. The pastor had come
very nearly killing a man in a drunken brawl. A local minister had also
been on a drunk and in the thrill of it had whipped his wife. One of my
first experiences after arriving was a church trial. On the trial committee
was a fine Indian chief. He listened to the evidence with typical
Indian stoicism, then just before a vote was taken, he said: "Before I feel
competent to vote on this question, I must know what the minister whipped his
wife for. She might have needed it."

With those two co-workers I began my ministry. Needless to say, I was
none too popular. No band met me at the station. But I was not appalled by
my situation. I had three sermons and I made up my mind to preach the best
of these the following Sunday. The home folks who had heard them had pro-
nounced them great. Furthermore, they had told me I would be a bishop some
day, that I could already preach as well as some presiding elders. I was
foolish enough to take that as a compliment.

But when Sunday came and I preached that best sermon, if anybody thought
I was destined for any high office they kept it a profound secret. The rene-
gade pastor invited me home for dinner. When we reached the house, he
disappeared. The large family disappeared with him. By and by I was invited
to dinner, where I ate absolutely alone. Having finished I looked about
for some member of the family, failing to find anybody I took my hat, walked
out through the forest, struck the railroad and started west. I was not bent
on growing up with the country, but only in getting away from the agony of that
awful hour.

Now I can smile as I look back to that distant day, but I think a blacker
afternoon never passed over my head. What was the brunt of the attack of the
nenemy upon me? It was not the hardness of my situation. It was rather the
unspeakable foolishness of myself. I began to talk to myself in this fashion:
"You were doing some good where you were. You can do no good here. God did
not call you to preach after all. You are here not because you are heroic. You are here because you are a fool."

You will not be surprised, therefore, to learn that when I had a long distance call a few days later saying that I had been chosen for an excellent position in my own field and in my native state, I eagerly accepted. As I decided to take this position, the one resolve uppermost in my mind was this: "Whatever happens, one thing sure, I will never preach."

Yet here I am with forty-one years of joyous ministry behind me. During these years, over and over I have been able to say with conviction, "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world." Having thus tried out this high task, I affirm that for me it is without a rival. I greatly admire other vocations, but in comparison with the privilege of preaching, they are as starlight to sunlight.

Therefore, let me close with this word from "Beside the Bonny Briar Bush". You remember the old Scottish mother who was passing to where beyond these voices there is peace. "Here is my watch and chain," she said to her little child at the threshold. "You are near it, and I will be near it." "When you feel the chain about your neck it will remind you of your mother's arms... You will follow Christ. If he offers you his cross, you will not refuse it, for he always carries the heavy end himself." And so he does and so he will. If God is therefore offering you his cross by calling you into his ministry, do not let him. Bear in mind, there is no substitute for the doing of the will of God. In his will, and there alone, is our peace.
"LET US ALONE"
Exodus 14:12

"Let us along that we may serve the Egyptians."

What a strange word! Here is a man sent of God. He has come to a nation of slaves. He has been sent to a people who did not own their own souls. Life for them is dull and drab and grey. There is no hope either for themselves or for their children. Today they must do their bit of drudgery at the lash of the taskmaster. It will be the same tomorrow. It will be the same to the end. It will be the same for their children. Surely to them life is not worth the living.

But a new day is dawning. God has not forgotten them. God is still dreaming great dreams for them. Therefore, He sends Moses to awaken them and to set them on the road that leads to a land of freedom. He has come to arouse them to begin the realization of their great destiny. But instead of giving an eager obedience they are only annoyed. They turn fretfully upon Moses and upon God Himself and say, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians."

PART I.

The first big fact that this brings before us is this: God is a disturbing factor in human life. God breaks in upon us and arouses us; speaks to us, makes us aware of what we are, makes us aware of what we may become. God allows no man to sleep his way into a useless life and into a useless eternity. There is never a soul that is not sometimes disturbed by almighty God.

This is the case regardless of His interference on our behalf. His spirit strives whether we welcome it or resent it. When God says, "My spirit will not always strive with man" at least this is indicated,
"Let Us Alone"

that God's spirit does strive. God does move upon us. God does take hold of us and shake us into wakefulness. There is not a man listening to me, there is not a man in the wide world to whom God has not definitely spoken over and over again. He begins in our very infancy and continues as far as it is possible until our ears are stopped by death.

PART II.

How does God disturb us? How does He break in upon these insulated people of long ago?

1. He disturbs us thru a human personality. To these hopeless slaves God sent Moses. Thru the centuries God has never left Himself without a witness. There has never been a day so dark but that God has blazed forth to the world thru some Spirit-filled personality. God speaks thru His prophets. God speaks thru the ministers of the Word. God speaks thru every Spirit-filled personality.

I am speaking to a man who has drifted far from his moorings. He sometimes sneers at things that he once regarded with reverence. He laughs today at what would have one time made him blush. He is at home today in company that once would have filled him with disgust. But he is often restless and wretched. A face gentle with the gentleness of Jesus looks at him across the far spaces of the years. He is compelled to look into the eyes that were homes of silent prayer. Again and again God disturbs him thru the haunting memory of a Christian mother.

2. God speaks to us thru His providences. We can't live in a world like this and not hear the voice of God. As you look upon the
"Let Us Alone!"

beauty of the lily you remember that God clothed it. As you hear the chirp of the sparrow you recall that God takes account of it and is not too busy to attend its funeral. As you look upon the sunrise, God asks you if you will not let the Sun of righteousness rise upon you with healing in His wings. As you quench your thirst at the wells and fountains of this world, God says, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." God is always speaking to us thru our joys and thru our sorrows. In ten thousand ways He is seeking to awaken and to arouse and to call us to Himself.

3. God speaks to us thru the voice of conscience. What a strange something is conscience! When we honor its message it becomes the very voice of God in the soul. It is that something that commends me when I do right and rebukes me when I do wrong. It is that something that told me I was a coward when I failed to stand by my conviction in the face of the crowd. It is that something that made the sneers and laughter of the scorners seem a pitiful trifling something when it told me that I had done right. Conscience! It has made persecution and heartache seem almost a joy. It has given light in dark dungeons. It has made the block as soft as a pillow of down. Outraged, it has awakened thousands into sanity. It has scourged them as it did Judas out of the world making even hell seem a place of refuge. God speaks to man thru the voice of conscience.

Of course, conscience may be trifled with until it becomes unreliable. I can play with this watch of mine till I can no longer trust it. The sailor may trifle with his compass till he can no longer.
depend upon it. He is left to travel by dead reconning. You can dis­regard the voice of conscience till that voice becomes silent. It may still speak but you will not hear it. God pity the man that has dis­regarded this heaven-sent voice within his own heart till he has lost his capacity to hear.

4. God speaks to us thru his book. When the King James version of the Bible was printed, that nation went thru a spiritual rebirth. No greater curse can come to a people than that of the closed Bible. That is the case whether the Bible is closed voluntarily or closed by the dictates of despotism. The Bible is God's message to the human soul. The voice that speaks thru the ages is His voice. Therefore, the Bible is a disturbing book.

It disturbs us by showing us where we are. The Bible picture of man outside the grace of God is not altogether flattering. It is true that it tells of great ancestry. It tells that he is of divine origin, that he is made in the image of God. But it tells also of the maring of that image. It tells of the tragic quarrel of the soul with God. It says that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It declares that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But it not only disturbs us by giving us a picture of what we are, but also by showing us what thru the riches of His grace we may become. As the mother eagle might say to the fledgling in her nest as she points to the far vault of blue, "you are made for that," so this book points to a Christlike manhood and declares, "you are made for that." Simon, son of Jona could never be content to be the man that
"Let Us Alone."

he was after he had had a vision of the larger man that he might be. God disturbs us by giving us visions of our better selves.

Finally He disturbs us by the call of the world's need. It is true that you may disregard this voice as all other voices. There are those that can stand in the presence of the most appalling needs, both physical and spiritual and be very little moved by them. But we are often quickly responsive to physical needs in this day. I think there was never a time when a real need of help was met with so ready response as it is today. I saw a negro man hurt on the streets of Washington and the whole city seemed to come to his aid inside of fifteen minutes.

But all are not so quick to respond to the deeper needs of the soul. But God disturbs those who have capacity to respond thru these needs. The priest and the Levite doubtless suffered passing were pangs as they rode by. The poor fellow lay greaning in his blood. But they were not greatly disturbed. But the good Samaritan was so disturbed that he could not pass. He had to give the man of his compassion, of his oil and wine, of his very self, of all that he had. Why do you want to return to China," one asked of a missionary who had been invalided home. "Because I cannot sleep at night for thinking about them," was the prompt reply. God disturbs us unless our hearts lose their sensitiveness thru the appeal of another's need.

PART III.

What response did these people make?

They did not respond as you would think by an eager acceptance of the will of God. There are some who do. They are the ones who find li
"Let Us Alone"

who find life and who give life. A young man rich in political prospects was greatly disturbed one day by his own needs and by the needs of his brothers. His name was Isaiah. God's voice rang thru his very soul saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for me." And this man dared turn away from all that the world offered and said, "Here am I send me." Such, thank God, has been the response of an innumerable company that no man can number.

But these did not welcome God's interference on their behalf. They met it with a peevish resentment. "You offer freedom," "We do not want to be free." "We are well enough off as we are." "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians." If they had been doing something worth while, it would not have been so bad. But to turn aside from what God has to offer, to lay hold on nothing better than abject slavery, that is amazing.

But it is what is taking place in the lives of countless thousands at this very hour. God is speaking to you, calling to you, pleading to you and you are saying, "Let us alone." "Not that I may do some great and beautiful something, but let me alone that I may be the slave of some petty and useless thing that can do nothing better than rob me of my soul." Some of you are saying to your parents as they try to save you from wasting your life, "Let me alone." You shook the hand of a friend from off your shoulder just the other day when he was trying to save you from moral bankruptcy and said, "let me alone."

When the Bastile was stormed they came to one cell where a prisoner had been shut up for long years. No ray of sunlight had been able to penetrate into that gloomy and stenchful hole. But now the burst
"Let Us Alone"

open door the light was in and the prisoner was offered freedom, but he shrank back and said "let me alone." "Shut the door the light hurts my eyes." God pitty us when we fall in love with our own slavery!

PART IV.

Why did this man resent God's interference on His behalf? There were many reasons. There were many reasons. I think the principal ones were these.

1. They had been slaves so long that they did not care to pay the price of freedom. To be free was to have to meet new responsibilities. It meant struggle. It meant battle and conflict. It meant the giving up of a life where all their thinking was done for them and to have to do some thinking for themselves. Freedom was costly and they were unwilling to pay the price.

2. They had a poor appreciation of the value of freedom. They had a mean conception of what God had to offer. And that is the trouble with so many today. Sad to say we who are Christians are often responsible for that. There is so little in our lives often times to make others long to be like us. We are so like the world. And for a professing Christian to be like the world is the very essence of tragedy. It gives a lie to the high claim we make for ourselves.

But in spite of the shoddy lives that many of us live, in spite of the way we seem to be trying often times to make the promises of God look utterly ridiculous, to be a Christian is a great privilege. It is a supreme privilege. It means a new birth. It means to have the peace that passeth understanding. It means fellowship with Jesus.
"Let Us Alone"

It means a growing likeness to Him. It means to share with Him in the work of saving the world. Christ offers a program for life that is really worthwhile. It is the only program that is big enough to meet the needs of a human soul. God save us from looking upon the salvation offered us in Christ Jesus as a cheap and paltry thing.

3. These people had been slaves so long that they had become content in a certain measure to be slaves. I think that was the saddest fact about them. It is bad for the prodigal to be in the far country among the swine, but that was not the lowest possible hell. There was yet a bottomless pit into which he had not gone and into which he did not go. He never did become content with the hog pen. He never did feel at home there. He never did lay down among the filth of it and say, "well this is the best I can do."

God has infinite hope for the sinner who is sick of his sin. God has infinite hope for the professing Christian who is failing in a measure and yet is pained by his failure. But for the man who is a sinner and is content to be so, he is the tragic character. The professing Christian who is counting for nothing and is content to count for nothing, he is the despair of God. May the Lord save us from a mean contentment with ourselves. It is bad to be a spiritual dwarf but it is worse to be content to be so. It is tragic to be a moral bankrupt but it is far more so to be content with our bankruptcy. It is pathetic to be a weak powerless Christian but it is the very height of pathos when we settle down to such lives with a snug declaration that we are doing the best we can. These people were cursed with a
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base contentment.

4. They resented the interference of God thru Moses because they were without hope. They knew slavery was an ugly thing. They may have realized something of the beauty of freedom, but they said, "It is beyond our reach. We are so weak. The Egyptians are so strong. Every effort of freedom has ended in failure. There may be a land flowing with milk and honey out across the sea but we can never reach it. It is only a bag of gold at the end of the rainbow. We shall only bruise our feet and tear ourselves with briars and thorns to no purpose. But the nimble goddess of the mist will flee from us faster than we can approach."

That spirit is much in evidence today. We have lost a sense of God's almightiness. I fancy the man was right who said that more people are failures thru sheer hopelessness, thru a sense of bafflement, than thru any other reason. Our old temptations have proved too much for us so long. Our pet sins have gone out to return only the stronger so often that we feel that we shall never win that we might as well leave off our great dreams and quit trying altogether.

PART V.

But what says God to these ungodly slaves?

It seems that He would have turned from them in contempt if not in positive anger. But He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. He is the supreme lover and love suffereth long. How patient a mother is with a disobedient and ungrateful child, but the loving patience of a mother is as nothing to the patience of God. Rebuffed in suffering, the door slammed in His
"Let Us Alone"

face, He persists. He stands at the door and knocks. He did so here and persisted till at least He induced these slaves to make a half-hearted start for freedom. Now they have reached the Red sea. But the Egyptians are behind them. The sea is in front of them. There is no way of escape. It is then all their peevishment and doubt and resentment broke out afresh. "Were there no graves in Egypt that you brought us out here." "Did not we tell you then to let us alone that we might serve the Egyptians." They still did not think of the great destiny offered them by God was worth dying for.

But hear God's response! "Fear not, the battle is not yours but God's. The Egyptians that you now see you will see no more forever." What an assurance! Here were their foes closing upon them. There is not the slightest hope. The battle was sure to be lost, but God says, "I will undertake for you. These foes that you dread will never conquer you again."

How I wish that every battled and defeated man might take this word to himself. The old temptations that got you yesterday, they will meet you again tomorrow. The taskmaster that has enslaved you and scourged you for years you feel that it will always be so, but God claims that He is able to give you victory. He is able to save unto the uttermost. That ugly and filthy habit that has lorded over you, that detestable sin that has lolled about in your soul as if it owned you. God says, "Fear not the battle is not yours but mine." "If you will trust Me you need never be conquered again."

He then told them their duty in that awful crisis. Theirs was to do one thing. Go forward. And as they went forward, at the
command of God, God brought back the waters for them till they came safely to the further shore. Then as their enemies undertook to follow there was disaster and the next morning the sea spit out the bodies of the men who had once been their foes and their masters.

Now you may remind me that most of these failed after all to reach the Land of Promise. That is true. They failed for the same reasons that made them slow to start. God gave them the land. It was theirs for the taking. But it could not be theirs if they persistently refused to take it. Nothing is yours that you will not possess. They refused to possess their possession with the result that life lost its gold and became a mere milling, a mere purposeless wandering in the wilderness. It became such a life as multitudes are living today. The life totally devoid of any great and ennobling and life-giving purpose.

But there were two noble exceptions. Caleb and Joshua in spite of difficulties faced forward. When God disturbed them and called they responded. They reached the land of their dreams. They became a blessing and their own personal lives were enriched. They became a blessing to their day and a blessing to all centuries.

I close with this question. God has spoken to you. He has disturbed you. At times you are miserable because of what you are. Because you know you have disappointed your possibilities. What are you going to do about it. You may give up in defeat. You may settle down into a cowardly contentment with what you are. If you do you will awaken some day to the tragic fact that you have disappointed your
possibilities in time and in eternity.

Years ago a fellow and friend to one of the leading artists of that day was going to the art gallery to see the pictures of his artist friend. As he went up the steps he saw the artist himself hurrying away. He tried to dodge past without speaking but his friend saw that he was weeping and would not let him escape. "What is the matter," he asked. As the great artist tried to choke back his sobs he said, "I have looked at the pictures of my early youth and those of my maturer years, and I have not painted so well as I might have done. I have disappointed my possibilities." God save you and me from this tragedy.