"Behold the dreamer cometh." The scene is the plain of Dothan. A bunch of wild cowboys and shepherders are watching their herds and their flocks. As they scan the horizon they see a traveler coming in the distance. It doesn't take them long to be absolutely certain who that traveler is. They could tell him by his swagger. They could tell him most surely of all by his showy dress, for this man is dressed in the height of fashion. He has a coat of many colors.

So they say, "Behold the dreamer." They know him. He is Joseph, the most promising and the worst hated member of the family. He is disliked on many accounts. He has had the misfortune of being born into a family where there were four different sets of children. Then, there were other exceedingly good reasons why, as one has said, "This young fellow was not as popular as Santa Claus." Prominent among these reasons was the one mentioned in the text: He was a dreamer. He was a seer of visions. He builted castles in the air. He was forever blowing bubbles.

"Behold the dreamer cometh." You can hear the scorn and the contempt and the hatred in the sentence clear across the centuries. They heartily despise this young fellow. They can scarcely endure him. For they themselves are not dreamers. They themselves are very practical men. They are not star gazers. They are building no castles. They are blowing no bubbles. Their one interest is wool and mutton and beef and hides. And with contempt and scorn and hatred they say, "Behold the dreamer."

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And yet it was just this fact that this callow and unpopular youth of seventeen was a dreamer that brought him his immortality. It was that fact that put a chasm world-wide between himself and his coarse and practical brothers. It was that fact that enabled him to be the savior of his race as well as the preserver of a great nation.

The truth of the matter is that the world has received its progress largely at the hands of the dreamers. Civilization has moved on and the horizon has been widened by the men who could see visions and dream dreams and blow bubbles. The world's art has come to us from the hands of the dreamers. The world's songs have been sung by the lips of the dreamers. The world's discoverers have been the vision seers. The world's saints have likewise been dreamers of dreams.

This epithet then of dreamer was just a badge of Joseph's superiority. It was that element in his character that made it possible for God to bring him to his lofty destiny. It was that characteristic that made for him a roadway from the tent of a Nomad to a palace upon the banks of the Nile.

Joseph, as we see him at the beginning, is a young fellow of many faults. Frankly we do not like him. In the first place he was a thoroughly spoiled boy. He had been all his life his papa's pet. He was born on the sunny side of the hill. His father had loved him more than all his other children. I do not suppose he could help this, but he could have helped allowing it to be known.
There is a favorite child in most families. There is a favorite pupil in most schools. I have heard teachers say that they never had favorites, that they never were partial to one pupil above another. I doubt if that is ever true. We do not love everybody alike. Anybody who does is an old stick and doesn't love at all. I used to teach and some of my pupils I loved devotedly and some I could hardly endure. The most that a teacher, as well as a parent oftentimes, can hope to do is not to show their partiality.

Yes, Joseph was a spoiled pet. That was not his fault altogether, but he suffered for it. Now, few spoiled children are very lovable except to those who spoil them. In fact, spoiling a child is one of the surest ways in the world of making him unlovely and even repellent. There is every chance that he will be overbearing, domineering and self-centered. He will want everything to come his way.

Some years ago I was in a home where there was a young lady just about the age of this youth Joseph, and it was her birthday. Her father and mother gave her a nice present, but it was not what she wanted. And even though I was company, she turned in my presence and the presence of those who had given it to her and dashed the present to the floor. The trouble with her was that she was spoiled till she was rotten.

And I think this accounts for not a few of the divorces that are being granted in such great numbers today. Here is a spoiled boy. He has always had his own way. He never has learned to yield one jot to the desires or the wishes of others. Here is a girl. She has been reared in the faith that "all roads lead to Rome" and that she is Rome. And by and by these two fall in love with each other and marry. What happens? It is just like an irresistible force hitting an immovable body. There is an explosion, a cataclysm, that is known as the divorce.

Joseph being thoroughly spoiled, was naturally also thoroughly conceited. Now, conceit is not a characteristic quite suitable to ingratiate us with others. There is scarcely a fault worse than conceit except that colossal fault of having a contempt for yourself. But the man who fancies himself the center of the solar system, the young cad who has gone to his own head, the young fellow who swaggers about, the world as if he had made it, - he makes you laugh disgustedly if you do not have to be yoked up with him too closely. But if you live in the same house with him his very egotism is likely to prove the flint that sets off your powder magazine and causes a family explosion.

Joseph's natural conceit was further increased by the fact that he was handsome. This young fellow was extremely good looking. He had been knowing it for a long time. His father had told him. Possibly some of the young ladies that lived at that far off day told him. And above all else, he told himself. Handsome, - and he dressed the part. For all I know, he had curly hair and a dimple. Anyway he was tremendously good looking. And that, as some of us know so well, is a great snare and a heavy temptation towards conceit.

Joseph's conceit colored his dreams. And he had no better judgment than to tell these dreams to his brothers. One morning he comes
out with sunny face and cocksure step and said, "Fellows, I dreamed last night. I dreamed that we were all shocking wheat and that my shock was the tallest one in the field and all your shocks came and bowed to mine." Then again he came and told them that he had had another dream: "I dreamed that the moon and the sun and the eleven stars bowed down to me." No wonder they hated him. He thought he was the "only pebble on the beach."

Then, as if this were not enough, Joseph, I am sorry to say, was a bit of a tattler. He was a tale-bearer. He spied on his brothers and told their evil conduct to his father Jacob. Now, if I were to ask everyone here who loved a tattler to hold up his hand, I don't suppose that unfortunate creature would get a single vote. And yet some of us keep up the damning business from generation to generation.

How much the world has suffered at the hands of tattlers, tale bearers, scandal mongers and gossips! How many a reputation has been torn into shreds! How many a good name has been blighted forever more! It is a terrible habit and few of us are altogether guiltless. Not that we start out with the deliberate purpose of hurting anybody, - we just want to ask if it is so. We simply take the child that has smallpox and carry it around to every home in the community to know if it really has smallpox. We are not out to spread a contagion, but we spread it none the less.

"Good name in man or woman dear, my lord, Is the immediate jewel of souls. Who steals my purse steals trash; 'Tis mine, 'tis his and has been slave to thousands, But he that filcheth from me my good name, Taketh that which not enriches him, But makes me poor indeed."

Yes, with sorrow be it said, Joseph was a bit of a tale bearer. He helped to stir that evil brew known as the witches' caldron, which might better, as one has said, be called the gossip's caldron.

"Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn and caldron bubble. Fill it of a finny snake, In the fire boil and bake; Wool of bat, tongue of dog, Eye of newt and toe of frog; For a charm of powerful trouble, Like a hell broth boil and bubble."

It is easy to understand why Joseph, the dreamer, was not popular. In fact, he was not only unpopular, but was genuinely hated, so much so that when these rough men saw him coming with his cocksure stride across the grassy plain, they put their heads together and determined that they would stop his egotistical dreaming forever more.

So no sooner had he arrived than they laid hands on him with the purpose of murdering him then and there. But Reuben's counsel was to put him in a pit and let him die. So they let him down into the pit, a
kind of tank, narrow enough at the top to be covered by a stone, but large enough at the bottom to hold thousands of gallons of water. In this he is buried alive.

Now, here begins a new chapter in Joseph's life. In spite of a thousand faults, he has this one virtue, that he is a dreamer, a man of faith, a seer of visions. To bring out the best in him, to cure him of many of his glaring faults, it is necessary that he be put through a stern process of education.

If Jacob had been choosing his school, doubtless he would have sent him to some fine finishing school that would have finished him completely. But God chose his school for him and He sent him to the big University of Hard Knocks, "that University whose colors are black and blue." Here the rough hammer and chisel chipped away what was mean and unmanly and freed the angel that was pent up within him.

The scene of the pit is the first step. The young fellow finds himself in the dark, in the mud, in the silence. Nobody hears his cry or pays the least attention to his prayers. He doesn't look a bit like the tallest shock in the field any more. The sun and the moon and the stars do not seem to be the least inclined to bow to him.

But he is not to die there. While the rough and wicked cowboys are eating the provisions that Joseph has brought, some traveling merchants draw near. Judah, whom you will at once recognize as a born Jew, was struck by a brilliant idea. "Let us not kill him", he said, "he is our brother. Let us sell him. That is good business."

It is altogether probable that Judah felt real pious after this speech. To murder him outright, - that is bloody work. But it was strictly all right, as Portia well says, "to take your pound of flesh if you do not shed any blood." We believe that still. You can break your mother's heart and shorten her life by your godless neglect, just so you don't use a gun. You can prove unfaithful to your marriage vows and send some soul in sorrow and shame to the grave, just so there is no blood shed. You can pay a cheap and chintzy wage and help a young girl,

"After she has sold her days to greed,  
To sell her nights to shame."

That is all right, so you don't shed blood. "Let us sell him," said Judah of yesterday and today, "then we will be guiltless and also twenty dollars to the good." And so they sold him for twenty pieces of silver.

Joseph went into Egypt and became the slave of Potiphar, the captain of the guard. He is a man of ability. He is a man to be trusted. He soon becomes the most trusted man in his master's service. He comes to know his master's business better than he knows it himself.

This fact led him to the second great trial of his life. This was his second course in the grim school of Adversity. Joseph, as we said before, was handsome. The wife of Potiphar fell in love with him. And slave though he was, she threw herself in his way and at his feet.
Now, there was every reason why Joseph should have responded to her. In the first place he was amidst a lax and rotten society. Those among whom he moved would not only not have condemned him for it for the most part, — they would have commended him. (Allen Denslow.)

Then, too, to have responded, to have yielded to her was the safest way, so far as appearances went. He knew well enough that if he resisted that she would in all probability become his bitterest enemy. He knew well that exposure was far less probable if he yielded than if he refused.

But to his eternal praise, be it said he did refuse. His master has trusted him. He will not betray his trust. Above all else, he will not betray his God and himself. He is a man of principle, and I know of few finer words than this: "Can I do this great evil and sin against God?" An easy, a loose, a rotting society, had not blinded him to the fact of sin. Adversity had not blinded his vision, strangled his dreams, nor killed his faith in God.

The hour of crisis came. And the wife of Potiphar feels her race burn with hot shame and hotter anger. She has been scorned by her husband's slave. Every drop of her aristocratic blood is clamoring for revenge, for —

"Heaven has no woe like love to hatred turned,
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned."

He is brought before his master and pleads not guilty. But he will not disclose the facts, even to save himself, because he knows these facts will bring heartache to his master. Joseph, the tale bearer, is dead. Joseph, the Christian hero, that can suffer and be silent for others, has come in his place.

The last course in his training for kingship follows immediately. He is cast into prison. He is in the darkness and in chains. He is in disgrace in a strange land. And that has come to him, not because he has done wrong, but because he has refused to do wrong.

It is a situation full of testing. He has done right. He has stood by his conscience and by his God and by his dreams, and yet he is suffering from it, when if he had proved disloyal he might have escaped. Then, it seems that right does not pay. Then it seems after all that men do gather "grapes of thorns and figs of thistles." Then, it does seem that men may sow nettles and reap wheat or sow wheat and reap nettles.

Yes, it is a trying time in any man's life when sin seems successful and righteousness seems to fail. The truth of the matter is that sin is never more dangerous as when it prospers. It never fails so utterly as when it seems to succeed. It is also true that righteousness is never more successful than when it seems to fail. But it is not easy for this young man, forsaken and disgraced and in prison, to realize this.

Then while in this prison he was tested, too, by the sin of in-
gratitude. Two prisoners of rank had come into the circle of his friendship, the butler and baker of Pharaoh. One night these two disgraced officials dreamed each a dream and Joseph gave them the interpretation. The baker, he said, was to be hanged three days later, but the butler was to be restored to favor.

"Now," he said to the butler, "when you are out and when you have been restored to the sunshine of the king's favor, don't forget me. I am suffering unfriended and I am suffering innocently. Remember me to the king." And the man promised, but, as so often, he forgot. And two long, bitter years passed and Joseph, the man who for a lifetime had been a dreamer, had now been for thirteen years a slave. And the outlook seemed as black as night.

But the day burst suddenly. The king had a dream and nobody could give him the interpretation. Then the butler remembered and recommended his friend who was in prison. And Joseph was brought and he gave to the king the interpretation of his dream and stepped into a position of highest usefulness and honor.

And what was the secret? Just this: He allowed nothing, no ingratitude of men, no hate, no disappointment, to rob him of his dreams. In spite of all, he kept alive his faith, remained true to his ideals, loyal to his Heavenly vision.

And mark you, his victory came along the line of his dreaming. First, he interpreted the dreams for the baker and butler. Suppose when they came to him he had said, "Ah, don't talk to me about dreams. I used to believe in them. I used to think that God had some great destiny for me. I used to believe that I would be His spokesman, but my dreams have only led me into the night and into the quagmires of disappointment. Don't talk to me about dreams. I wish I had never dreamed."

Or he might have laughed at his own self and said, "How silly, but I have thrown that overboard. And I am well content now in Egypt to do as the Egyptians do." And he might, as we so often do, settle down to be a creature of mud and clay. He might have come not only to have given up and forsaken his old dreams altogether, but have rather prided himself on his worldly wisdom in so doing. We do that sometimes. Some or you may be doing it now.

"The land of our youth will be clean burnt out, but we will subsist on the smell of it, and whatever we do, we will fold our hands and suck our gums and think well of it. Yes, we shall be perfectly pleased with ourselves, and that is the perfectest hell of it."

"Behold the dreamer cometh," they said in scorn. But there came a time when their scorn gave place to honor and gratitude. And the dreamer's coming was the coming of one who was to serve and to same themselves and their nation. He came to his day with infinite gifts of corn because he was and remained a dreamer. He came to his day and our day with infinite gifts of inspiration for the same reason. He was a dreamer, a man of vision, a man of faith in God. "Behold the dreamer",
The Favorite - Dec. 31:3

I. The Blame of It
1. Not having a favorite. There is none a favorite in school etc. a matter of taste. I like dogs preaching better than others. Music also, I prefer a song with words and tune others like me or serve as traffic for plants. I like dogs better than cats etc.

2. For having favorites. He should have known better if wrecked his father's house.

II. Tragedy of His Becoming it
1. Spoiled the boy.
2. Made him conceited.
3. Take his coat mark of leadership. There came a time when he could have worn it in such a way as to make all glad. But not now. It is not our good fortune that affords. It is the way we conduct ourselves. Money, position, beauty, ability, auto culture, don't be a book. -Ford, W. B.-
4. Helped him be a pleasure he told tales.
5. Helped him to be hated.

III. His Education
1. Not in ease and idleness, in Lord Knows.
2. At school he never dreamed of what was ahead of him. He was so centered on himself that he had no idea what the other fellow thought. He was so interested in talking about himself he never dreamed what a rose he was. But here in fact he soon began to come to himself.
3. Sold for 60. All the other fellows thought him worthy enough. But not one believed of what he was to be worth.
4. In law he made a good stand, presence, prime minister.
5. He was unpatriotic and stood suffer and kept silence. "Forgot it."
6. Forgotten, but not unfettered

IV. Death Came
1. He came in a palace on the Nile.
2. He became a man, forgiving, loyal to God.
3. His heart: "God was with him!"
they said of a crack-brained Italian. But the cracks in his brain were fissures through which light filtered and shone upon a new world. And in fidelity to his dream, new continents were born.

"Behind him lay the great Azores,
Behind the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said, 'Now must we pray,
For lo, the very stars are gone.
Dear Admiral, speak, what shall I say?'
He said, 'Sail on, sail on and on.'

"My men grow mutinous day by day,
My men grow ghastly wan and weak.'
The sad mate thought of home,
A spray of salt weed washed his swarthy cheek.
'What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,
If we sight not but seas at dawn?'
'Why you shall say at break of day,
Sail on, sail on, sail on and on.'

"They sailed and sailed and winds might blow
Until at last the blanched mate said,
'Why nobody, not even God, would know
Should I and all my men rail and read.
The very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say.'
He said, 'Sail on, sail on and on.'

"They sailed and sailed, then spake the mate,
'The mad sea shows his teeth tonight;
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth as if to bite.
Brave Admiral, speak but one good word.
What shall I do when hope is gone?'
The word leaped like a leaping sword:
He said, 'Sail on, sail on and on.'

"Then pale and worn, he kept his watch,
And peered through darkness.
Oh, that night of all dark nights!
And then a speck, a light, a light, a light!
It grew, a starry flag unfurled.
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained the world, and gave the world
Its grandest lesson: 'Sail on, sail on.'"

And I can wish for you no higher benediction than that you will be one of the world's dreamers, the seer of some heavenly vision, and that, like Paul and like Joseph, you may be true to your vision.
HOW TO BE LUCKY

Genesis 39--2

"God was with Joseph, and he was a lucky fellow."

I

We are naturally interested in Joseph. First, we are interested in him because he was lucky. We do not like to hear bad luck stories. Here is a young fellow telling how he made a touch down. Over there is another telling how he fumbled the ball. Who has the crowd about him? The man who won. The player who made the touch down is surrounded by a mob while the man who fumbled is delivering his message to the air. Here is a fellow telling how he made a home run. There is another explaining why he struck out. But we turn our backs on him to listen to the home run king. We are interested in the lucky, and Joseph was a lucky fellow. Second, we are interested in Joseph because we all want to be lucky ourselves. He may have just the secret that we need to learn. Everybody wants to have good luck. Do we not say it is better to be born lucky than rich? Certainly. There is many a rich man who is not lucky in the least. What is the use of having money to buy all the food in the world, if you die of indigestion. What is the value of pictures and books to him who has no taste for art or for literature. What is the good of having a large capacity to help, if you are so stingy that parting with a dollar is like saying goodbye to a favorite child. Riches are not necessarily a blessing, but luck such as Joseph had is.

Since everybody desires to be lucky, we provide ourselves with those utensils that are said to bring results. That is
the reason you carry certain coin around in your pocket. That is the reason our colored friend provides himself with a rabbit foot. Some years ago I saw a man with a team stalled. He had yelled at them and applied the lash until they would not pull a bit. He called on a colored man who was passing to help him. This brother immediately took a rabbit foot out of his pocket and rubbed the mules' noses and stroked their ears with it. He then gave the word and they pulled out at once.

Not only must we have these articles that are conducive to good luck, but we must guard against losing what luck we have. There is a feeling among many that it is dangerous to speak of your good health and your prosperity. In case you do, some jinx is liable to snatch it from you. I told a friend some time ago that I had not had a cold in so many years. He urged me at once to knock on wood. He seemed to think that if I failed I would begin to sneeze at once. "How is your choir?" one preacher asked another. "We have not had a row for the past six months" and he reached over and knocked on his desk. But knocking on wood is not the only remedy. There are others that are quite as good. For instance if you start on a journey and have to turn back, if you will only make a cross mark and spit in it, you will be saved of any possibility of bad luck growing out of the unfortunate event. But unless you want disaster to overtake you, do not sit down at the table at thirteen. Do not start a journey on Friday. Do not break a mirror, and be sure you do not enter a building by one door and go out by a different door. And if you chance to see the new moon through the brush over your left shoulder, you are of all men most miserable.

Now to be perfectly frank, I am not a profound believer in
these rules for good luck. But there is one in which I do believe. I have good news for you. I have the joyful announcement that every man may be lucky if he only will. You may be down on your luck at this moment. You may be out at the elbows both physically and morally, but if you will follow the recipe that I give you tonight, there is nothing in the world that can keep you from being lucky. I do not mean by this that you will necessarily get rich or that you will become famous or handsome. But you will have that inner prosperity of soul which this old translator of the Bible called luck.

II

How is luck to be won?

We can find some help in our answer to that question by seeing how Joseph became lucky. Joseph's luck did not come about as a matter of chance. Nothing does. That is true for the simple reason that there is no such thing as chance. This is a world of law. The law of gravitation operates in the East and in the West, in the past, centuries and in the present. It is never idle. Neither is the law of sowing and reaping. What a man sows he reaps. Whether he lives in Memphis, Tennessee, or in Memphis in Egypt. There is no chance. What we call chance is only another name for our ignorance. For instance when you toss a coin to see who will get the kick off in the ball game, how that coin falls is governed by exact laws. If you could tell how much pressure of the thumb would be required to turn that coin before it hit the earth when held at a certain height, you would get either side up that you desired. But you are ignorant
and you call that ignorance chance.

Nor was Joseph lucky because of the circumstances that surrounded him. There were many circumstances surrounding the life of Joseph that one would naturally consider lucky. There are others that they would naturally consider very unlucky. But whether anything is lucky for you or not depends upon how you receive it and what you do with it. What would bring luck to one man would bring disaster to another.

For instance, Joseph was a favorite son. He was his Papa's pet. He was the pampered and flattered member of the household. He dressed in the latest fashion. He had a coat of many colors, which fact indicated that he was the destined leader of the family. But this was not of necessity a blessing to Joseph. It might have proved a curse. More often it does. I believe I had rather risk a despised son of the family to make good than the pampered favorite.

Then Joseph was handsome. But good looks do not necessarily bring good fortune. To be-beautiful is often times a snare. I would not undertake to tell you what a struggle it has cost me. But it has absolutely ruined many folks. Compelling beauty brought Lady Hamilton from the lowest possible social position to the highest. But the path she walked was a path of pitch. She would have been better off had she been among the homliest of women.

What then was the secret of Joseph's good luck? It consisted in what Joseph was in himself. He was the maker of his luck, as you are of yours. It is not some jinx that is to blame for your failure. You are to blame. "It is not in our
stars, dear Brutus, but in ourselves, that we are underlings". Joseph as every other man was maker and the molder through the help of God for his own good fortune. He was lucky not because he was a child of happy circumstances. He was lucky because of what he was in himself.

III

What were the virtues that made for his good fortune? First, he was a dreamer. Joseph had a lookout upon the morn. He did not get so absorbed in the here and now that he forgot the things that lay ahead. While the vision of his brothers was totally absorbed upon mutton and beef, he was dreaming and seeing visions of finer and better things.

Now I think it unfortunate that there was considerable conceit in Joseph's dreams. But this was the result of the callowness of youth rather than of wickedness of heart. I think it unfortunate also that he was foolish enough to tell his brothers of the ambitious dreams that he had. To tell them how all their shocks bowed to his shock and how the sun and the moon and the eleven stars also bowed before him, thus proclaiming his own greatness: - to tell such dreams was not calculated to make him popular. But though his dreams might have been faulty, yet this remains that he was a dreamer, and the conquests are won for a man who can dream.

How much the world owes to its dreamers. That marvelous picture was a dream before it was spilled upon the canvass by the hand of the artist. That poem sang its sweet cadences in the mind of the poet before it came forth with its melody for the world. That great Cathedral was a dream before it was a
reality. That great suspension bridge was first suspended in
the imagination of the engineer before it carried the traffic
of two mighty cities. We will not rebuke the dreamer, we will
rather praise him for he is one of the servants of mankind.

Second, not only was Joseph a dreamer, he was a worker. What
dauntless energy he had. After he comes upon the scene, we
never find him idle. He is always lucky enough to have a job.
He is working ceaselessly, diligently, enthusiastically. There
were those that might ascribe Joseph's prosperity to mere chance,
but those who knew him, would have given much of the credit to
persistent untiring work.

My young friend, it is well to bear in mind that abiding
success is not won in any field of endeavor in any other way.
In whatever vocation you have if you make good in that vocation,
you have got to work and work hard. If you depend on pull, you
will sooner or later be pulled out of your job. If you depend
on luck instead of work, you will be lucky if you stay out of
the poor house. Ability even to the point of genius does not ex-
cuse us from hard work. In fact one has even described genius
as an infinite capacity to take pains. That is, as an infinite
capacity to do hard, painstaking, exacting work. Third, Joseph
was a man of unshakable faith in God. That is the biggest fact
about him. It was faith in God that colored his dreams. It
was faith in God that nerved him for his ceaseless work. "God
was with him", says the authorized version, "and he was pros-
perous". "God was with him", says Tyndale, "and he was a lucky
fellow." Every man is forever in luck who has God on his side.
Nothing can prove of abiding good fortune to the man without God.
Joseph walked with God, hence he was a lucky fellow.
Of what did Joseph's luck consist? What profit was there in his being lucky? What was the content of his luck? First, he was kept clean in the midst of a corrupt and rotten environment. Look at his situation. He is away from home. That in itself often causes us to take wrong courses that we would not take otherwise. Then he was a slave. He might have felt that he had already reached the lowest possible depths. Then the one who through herself across his path was the wife of his master. That made sin seem safe and easy. Resistance was hard and dangerous. But see how Joseph met it. "Can I do this great evil and sin against God?" And he passed through that moral swamp without a fleck of mud upon him. Truly he was a lucky fellow. Second, he was kept sweet and courageous amidst all his adversities. His brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, but he never allowed himself to hate them in return. He would not allow their ill treatment to embitter him. Arrived in Egypt, instead of whining about his hard lot, instead of tormenting everybody by telling them of the position he once held and of the purple coat he once wore, he went to work. He said, "If I must be a slave, I will be the best slave in Egypt. And it was not long until he was at the head of all the master's affairs, trusted as few men are capable of being trusted.

But scarcely had he reached the height of his master's confidence when he was cast down to lower depths than ever. He was not only a slave but he was a prisoner. And that not because he had done wrong, but because he had done right. If we suffer for the evil that we have done, our faith in the law of sowing and reaping is likely to be confirmed. But if we suffer for having
done right, we are in danger of suspecting those laws and be-
coming convinced that man can after all gather grapes of thorns
and figs of thistles. But Joseph reached no such conclusion. In
prison he is the same patient, cheerful, helpful man that he has
been before.

What is the result? Soon everybody trusts him. It is per-
fectly marvelous how this young slave could win the confidence of
folks. The warden of the prison trusted him and put many of his
responsibilities upon his capable shoulders. His fellow prisoners
trusted him. While others have been trying to break out, Joseph
has been busily trying to find the freedom of real usefulness with-
in the prison. One day two men who once held high position with
the king, come to him in perplexity and ask his advice about cer-
tain dreams that they have had. He helps them. One of these pris-
oners goes to freedom and the other goes to death.

Now when the prisoner who was free told Joseph goodbye, he
did so with many words of appreciation. He assured him that when
he was once more the king's butler, he would not forget. But once
out in the big world he did forget. For two years Joseph was left
to languish in prison. But even then he did not become sour. He
did not rage against his forgetful and ungrateful friend. He did
not ring his hands in impotent rage and cry, "Ingratitude, thou
marble-hearted fiend. How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to
have a thankless friend."

Joseph was not embittered by his adversity. Third, neither
was he spoiled by his prosperity. That is more remarkable still.
For many a man who can stand up under adversity, rots down and
goes to pieces under the strain of prosperity. Joseph's time came
at last. The King had a dream. Nobody could explain its meaning. The butler remembered, and Joseph was called. He gave the desired explanation and thus the one-time denizen of the slave pit moved into a palace on the Nile.

But even this did not turn his head. As the man next to the king, he was the hardest worker in Egypt. Nor did he work for himself, but for others. This dreamer had upon his hands the big task of saving the nation and saving many outside nations. And in the rush of affairs he was neither too busy nor too proud to send and have his old father brought down where he could see after him. And he was forgiving enough to take care also of his once envious and unnatural brothers. Truly he was a lucky fellow.

I do not know that Kipling had Joseph in mind, but it would be hard to find one that his lines more truly describe.

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you,

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you and make allowance for their doubting, too,

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting, or be lied about, don't deal in lies,

Or being hated, don't give way to hating, and yet not look too good nor talk too wise,

If you can dream and not make dreams your master,

If you can think and not make thoughts your aim,

If you can meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two imposters just the same,

If you can hear the truth that you have spoken twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,

If you can see things you gave your life to, broken and stoop and build them up again with worn out tools,
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, or walk with kings nor lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you, if every man count with you, but none too much,

If you can fill each unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run,

Then yours is the warth and everything that is in it, and what's more, you will be a man, my son."

Joseph was a lucky fellow. So may you be if you are true to Joseph's God. He makes every man forever lucky. Is not that what Paul meant when he said, "All things work together for good to them that love God." He turns our losses into gains. He changes our defeats into victories. He kisses our tears into jewels. In fact there is absolutely nothing can come to you in the life that now is or in that which is to come, but what will be an stroke, if you belong to Him. Take Christ as your king tonight and one day it may be written of you, "He is a lucky fellow."
HOW TO BE LUCKY

Genesis 39:2

I

"And the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man." The translation by Tyndale, while more ancient than that found in the Authorized Version, has a more modern ring to it. "The Lord was with Joseph and he was a lucky fellow." So we are interested in Joseph at once. We are interested in him first because he is lucky. Failures do not fascinate. Go out on the street tomorrow and undertake to tell the fellows how you fumbled the ball and they will turn from you to listen to another player with a light in his eye and enthusiasm in his voice as he tells how he made a touchdown. We are interested in the man who put his money on the right horse, in the man who made a wise investment, in the man who brought in a gusher instead of somebody digging a dry hole.

Then we are interested in Joseph’s luck because we wish to be lucky ourselves. Do we not have a saying that it is better to be born lucky than rich? Certainly. There is many a rich man who is not in luck at all. What is the use of being able to buy the choicest food in the world if you can’t eat it? What is the use of being able to furnish yourselves with ten thousand beds if you can only use one and are unable to sleep in that? What is the use in being able to purchase the finest of pictures if you do not love art? What is the good of having access to the choicest of books if you have never learned to read?

Now because we wish to be lucky we provide ourselves with certain instruments that are conducive to good luck. We have our charms and our horse shoes. Some time ago I came upon a man with
a stalled team. He had shouted at his two spirited horses, and had thrashed them till they were all aflutter and would not pull at all. The enraged driver asked a colored brother who was passing, to give him assistance. He readily consented. At once he took a rabbit foot from his pocket, went round to the horses' heads, rubbed it over their noses and heads, talked to them and petted them. Then he restored his rabbit foot, took up the lines, gave orders to move, and they pulled their load right out. He had that which he thought was conducive to good luck.

Then we guard diligently against losing what luck we have. Hence we will not start a journey on Friday. We will not sit down to a table with thirteen. We will not turn back without making a cross mark and spitting in it. We studiously avoid seeing a new moon through the brush over our left shoulder. Such foolish conduct could not but involve us in bad luck. Then, to break a mirror would likely prove fatal.

We safeguard ourselves in other ways. If good fortunes come our way we must not say much about it, else some jinx will get us and everything will be spoiled. I was telling a friend some time ago that I was remarkably immune from colds. I had not had a serious cold for ten or fifteen years. He warned me earnestly to knock on wood, else I should begin sneezing at once. In the community in which I grew up, for one to say that one felt well was little short of disgrace. In truth it was simply unthinkable. The best that anybody ever ventured to be was tolerable. Beyond that no decent man dared to go.

Now I must confess that I do not take this kind of luck seriously. But the kind of which this inspired writer is speaking is very fascinating. Joseph came into possession of the kind of luck, a type of prosperity that is most desirable, and what is so
heartening about it all is that this kind of prosperity is within reach of every one of us. It may be ours whether we are rich or poor. It may be ours whether we are cultured or uncultured. It may be ours whether the world crowns us or crucifies us. Everyone may enjoy the prosperity that was enjoyed by Joseph.

II

How did Joseph come by his luck?

He did not win it by chance. We never do. This is not a world of chance. It is a world of law. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This text is often read as a threat, as a solemn warning. In so reading it we do not give it its full meaning. It is a warning but it is also a promise. It brings to us a heartening assurance that it is our privilege to decide upon our own harvest. We can determine in advance what we are going to reap when the harvest time comes. It is true that tares will grow if we plant them. It is equally true that flowers will grow if we plant them. If we reap a worthy harvest we shall not owe the fact to chance but to our conformity to law.

Nor did Joseph win it by virtue of certain circumstances. We are not denying for a moment that circumstances have their influence. But no one can say that certain circumstances will surely bring about certain definite results. Circumstances that would mar one life, make another. Some are made by opposition. Some are wrecked by it. Circumstances alone never account for any character. "It is not in our stars, dear Brutus, but in ourselves that we are underlings."
A professor of philosophy stood before a large class of youth in one of our universities some time ago and said, "A lot of you young fellows have come here tied to your mothers' apron strings. I am going to kick your props out from under you and teach you to swim. If you can't swim, damn you, you ought to drown." Now this professor possibly thought he was saying a worthy and wise word. In my opinion his position is devilish, but be that as it may. Some were doubtless strengthened by having their props kicked from under them, and some surely drowned. The fault was partly that of the professor, but not altogether so.

I have in mind two friends. One of them worked his way up from poverty. During the days of his struggle he was one of the most useful men and one of the most lovable that it has ever been my privilege to know. He was an honor to his church and an honor to his profession. But having established himself as one of the leaders in a great calling, he went to pieces morally and wrecked his home. In a measure he was a victim of circumstances, but they were circumstances that might have ministered to his growth instead of to his undoing.

I was preaching in an eastern city some years ago. A splendid young business man came at the close of the service and invited me to lunch. He was a leading furniture dealer in his city. He told me of his first job and how his employer turned him off, brutally, telling him that he was of no account and never would be. The young chap went to his hotel, telephoned the man who formerly employed him and asked him for a conference. His request was granted. He asked to be taken back. His request was refused. "Then," said the young chap, "I will work for you for nothing." "You will not!" was the answer. "If you come in my store I will kick you out." "If you kick me out the front door," was the reply, "I will come in the
It was as good as his word. The young chap showed up the next morning. As he was working for nothing he chose his own department and worked for almost a year without a penny. But at last he walked out of the store, having saved some $16,000, and went into business for himself. He was not a victim of circumstances, he was master of them.

That was the secret of Joseph's success. There are three distinct epochs in Joseph's life.

1. As a youth. When we first meet Joseph we do not like him. This is the case not because he is wanting in finer qualities. He is a splendid young fellow physically, handsome and attractive. Then he has intellect. There is no shutting our eyes to the fact that he has real ability. But in spite of these good qualities there are marked defects that repel us. These defects caused him to be the most unpopular member of his father's household. For some of them he was not altogether responsible, but he suffered none the less.

   (1) He was his father's favorite. Jacob was not to be blamed for preferring Joseph to any of his other sons. He was to be blamed for letting all of them know it. But he made no secret of his preference. He spoiled this favorite dreadfully. He decked him out in a coat of many colors, which was a badge of his future leadership of his clan. This same coat also became a red rag in the face of his jealous and enraged brothers. Why do we spoil our children? Sometimes we do so because it is the easiest way out. To correct them, to talk to them, to give them right discipline, requires too much time. We have to work hard in the day and go to the movies at night. Then, at other times we spoil them because we do not want to disappoint them. We desire that they should be pleased in every particular. But it is well to remember that if we are eager that they have their way in every particular, this old world is not.
They are going to get their disappointments later that you might have given them to their profit. In spoiling your child you are adding to his unpopularity and laying up for him future heartache.

(2) Then Joseph was conceited. Now a measure of conceit is not bad, but to be everlastingly praising yourselves and flouting your fine qualities in everybody's face is not to increase your popularity. That young cock that used to boast that the sun rose every morning to hear him crow was so little loved that everybody felt relieved when he found his way into chicken salad. Joseph could not keep his conceit secret. One day he breezed out to tell his brothers of his dream. "I dreamed last night we were all shocking barley, but mine was the biggest shock, and all of your shocks bowed down to mine." "A keen lad, that," said Jacob. "Miserable pest!" said his older brothers. Again he told of a dream where the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. That even seemed to bore Jacob for Jacob was the sun.

(3) Then, added to all this Joseph was a talebearer. Everybody present who loves a talebearer, hold up your hand. He doesn't get a vote. Then why not quit it. There is a text that I expect to use for a new sermon as soon as I can do so in good conscience. It is this: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." "Did you hear that awful thing about Madam X?" I do not know whether it is true or not, but I tell it none the less. And thus it grows and somebody's heart is broken.

"Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, Is the immediate jewel of their souls: Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, 'tis nothing; 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands; But he that filches from me my good name Robs me of that which not enriches him And makes me poor indeed."
During these youthful days Joseph stirred up the hate in the hearts of his brothers that was to

2. The second epoch in the life of Joseph came with his visit to his brothers down at Dothan. Had you asked him where he was going he would have said that he was taking some provisions down to his brothers and was going to investigate what they were doing and report back to his father. But really he was going away to school. He was going away to that great university of hard knocks whose colors are black and blue. He was going to the turning point in his life.

Those brothers saw him coming. They could tell him by his swagger. They could tell him by his coat. No sooner had he arrived than they stripped his coat from him and dropped him down in an old well to die. And as he faced death his shock was no longer the biggest in the field and the sun and moon and stars did not seem to have any tendency to bow to him. He was just a frightened youth torn from the sunshine and thrust into the darkness.

But he did not have to die there, thanks to the shrewdness of Judah. Judah said piously, "Let us not kill our brother, let us sell him." The appearance of certain merchants upon the scene had suggested this happy thought. "If we sell him," said Judah, "we shall not have his blood upon our hands, and what is far more important, we shall be twenty dollars to the good." Of course, it is perfectly correct to take your pound of flesh if you do not take any blood. So Joseph was sold and became a slave in the house of Potiphar, the captain of the guard.

Now it is in this situation that Joseph showed the stuff that was in him. Instead of whining and bewailing his lost dreams, instead of boring his fellow slaves to extinction by telling them of the splendid position he had once held, and of the lovely coat
of many colors he had once worn, he went to work. He was loyal. He was honest. He was useful. Soon he was trusted. He was made overseer of all his master's business.

Then came possibly the supreme test of his life. He was in an enervating atmosphere. Morals were low. He was gifted and attractive. The wife of Potiphar literally threw herself at him. To go wrong was the safe way. To go wrong was the profitable way. To go wrong was the pleasant and easy way. But Joseph met the situation in a way that must forever command our admiration. "Can I do this great evil and sin against God?"

There were certain big impossibilities in his life. There are certain things that every great soul simply cannot do. He faced the facts about the situation. The step that he was invited to take was not one simply of expediency. It was sin. He dared to call it by its ugly name. It was a sin against God. "Whatever may be the consequence," he said with firmness, "I cannot but say no." So he took his firm and costly stand. He lost the favor of Potiphar's wife. "Earth has no woe like love to hatred turned, Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." He lost his position. He ended in a prison cell. But in the prison cell he becomes a model prisoner; trusted by his jailer; trusted and loved by his fellow prisoners, he is still a loyal, faithful worker and friend.

3: This brings us to the third epoch of his life. One day the king is perplexed. One of his officials who has formerly been in prison and who has there made the acquaintance of Joseph, tells the king of this remarkable and gifted prisoner. The king has him called and the interview convinces his majesty that Joseph is the man of the hour. Thus this gifted and unpopular youth takes his final step from a nomad's tent to a palace on the Nile. Everybody said, "What a lucky fellow!"
III

What was the content of Joseph's luck?

1. He won position and power. But of course these do not make for prosperity. The days of his youth hurt Joseph rather than helped him. It was in the school of hard knocks that he really came to be a man. But the return of prosperity might have been his ruin had he not won something far better than outward success.

2. His real prosperity consisted in what he was himself. He had chosen to walk with God. In making this wise choice and in clinging to it he had become a man. He was rich in himself, rich in courage, rich in faith. At last he became rich in usefulness. He saved his own people and he saved the nation as well.

What tomorrow has for you and me we do not know. We can count on this. It has temptation. It has struggles. It has heartache. It has death. But just as sure as the fact of death is the fact of Divine Presence. In spite of circumstances, whether we succeed or fail as the world measures success or failure, we may be rich in our possession of God. We can get along without a great many things for which the world today is clamoring, but no man can get along without God. May this be a summary of your story and mine.

"The Lord was with him and he was a prosperous man."
HOW TO BE LUCKY

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was prosperous."
--Genesis 39:2

That is the translation of the Authorized version. Tyndale gives an earlier translation, but it sounds far more modern. It runs like this: "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a lucky fellow."

I

When I read that I knew I had come upon a topic of almost universal interest.

1. This is the case because we are interested in lucky people. We love to hear stories of the men and women who have won. Go out tomorrow and undertake to tell how you fumbled and before you finish your sad story, the crowd will turn away to listen to some other man with enthusiasm in his face and light in his eyes, telling how he made a touchdown. Go out to weep on somebody’s shoulder over the way you struck out. They will push you away to listen to somebody else tell how he drove the ball over the fence. I saw the picture of a fight sometime ago. The poor chap was knocked down, but he came back for more. Again he was knocked down, but again he came back. At last he received a final blow and lay as still as if dead. Then an enthusiastic crowd rushed in and seized one of the fighters and bore him off in triumph. Which one? The poor fellow who could not walk? No. They carried off the winner. We are interested in lucky folks.

2. Not only are we interested in lucky folks because we like success stories, but we are interested because we want to be lucky ourselves. There is no need of a single one of us making a failure of the business of living. That does not mean that all our dreams will come true! That is not necessary. That does not mean that all of us will be highly successful as the world measures success. But nobody
need fail. Nobody wants to fail. All of us want to win. All of us want to prosper.

We want to be lucky. Do we not have a saying that it is better to be lucky than rich? And of course that is profoundly true if we understand by luck what this author meant. Naturally it is possible to be rich without being in any real sense lucky. What is the use of having the money to buy half of the bread in the state if you are half-dead with indigestion? What is the good of being able to buy the choicest books if you do not care to read? I was in a home of wealth sometime ago. Standing in the library, I gazed with admiring eyes at row on row of lovely books.

"What a reader this rich man is!" I said to myself. Then desiring to see how his taste ran, I picked up book after book to find that the leaves had not been cut. What is the use of being able to possess the loveliest pictures if you have no taste for art? What is the use of having all the facilities for life if you do not know how to live? We are interested in lucky Joseph because we want to be lucky ourselves in the real sense of the word.

Desiring thus to be lucky, some of us take careful and silly measures for achieving luck. We have a lucky coin. We have a horse-shoe over the door. I remember years ago seeing a farmer whose team had stalled. He had whipped the horses and sworn at them until they were almost frantic and would not pull at all. By and by a colored brother passed and was invited to lend a hand. This wise colored man did so cheerfully. But instead of beginning to yell at the horses as the farmer had been doing, he reached in his pocket and took out a true rabbit's foot. He went to the horses' head and rubbed their noses and stroked their ears. He told them how this rabbit had been killed in the grave-yard by the light of the moon. Then he took the lines, spoke to them softly, and they pulled out immediately. He was a lucky fellow!

How careful some are to safeguard their luck! I told a gentleman the other day that I had not had a cold in ever so long. I almost never have one. He urged me with almost frantic earnestness to knock on wood. He seemed to feel that if I failed to do so some jinx would get me and I would be sneezing the next moment.
Some of you try to be lucky by refusing to sit down at a table where there are thirteen. You will not start a journey on Friday. If it so happens that you do start and have to turn back you are careful to make a cross mark and spit on it. When the new moon comes, you are careful not to see it over your left shoulder through the brush. You know full well that if you do such a rash thing your luck will go from you.

Now I am taking it for granted that you do not believe in luck in this sense. Yet there are those who are still foolish enough to believe that whether they live richly or not depends upon circumstances. A friend explained to me the emptiness and futility of his own life not long ago by saying that he had failed to get the lucky breaks. But no man is lucky in the sense that everything comes to him right side up. Real prosperity such as this Joseph enjoyed was not a matter of chance. There is no such thing as chance in the business of living. It was not a matter of mere good fortune. What Joseph became was not the result of what life did to him; it was the result of Joseph's response. So it will be in your case! His life, as yours and mine, was a mixture.

III

There were three distinct epochs in this man's life that are mixtures of good and bad, lights and shadows, even as yours and mine.

1. We meet him first in his childhood home. At first acquaintance we frankly do not like him. This is the case in spite of the fact that he has some excellent qualities even in the days of his callow youth. He is high; intelligent. We can already see marks of that vast ability that made him the greatest leader of his day. Then he is a fine animal. He is magnificently handsome. Good looks, of course, may be a real asset; they also may prove a real liability. It all depends upon the man who possesses it. But in this home there were factors that gave Joseph some genuine liabilities.

First, he was his father's favorite. There were four sets of children in this
family. That in itself was material for domestic tragedy. Joseph was the son of
the favorite wife. Now in every large family there is likely to be a favorite, just
as there is generally a favorite in every class. I have heard teachers say that
they had no favorites. I always took this with a grain of salt. I used to teach
myself. I think I had one or two pupils that I could hardly have loved if I had
wanted to. Then I had one that I married. The best that we can do about this
favorite business is to refuse to show it.

But Jacob not only made Joseph his favorite—that he could not help! Joseph
was so much more lovable than his rough and uncouth brothers! But where Jacob
missed it was in letting both Joseph and Joseph's brothers know it. He petted and
spoiled this favorite son into partial rottenness. That was bad for the other boys.
It was especially bad for Joseph. This was the beginning of that unpopularity that
soon made handsome Joseph the most hated member of his family.

Second, not only was Joseph petted and spoiled by his father, but he was
thoroughly conceited. His conceit was possibly born in part of his being made a
favorite. Then Jacob had chosen him as his heir. In token of that choice he had
given his son a many-colored coat. Joseph dressed in the height of fashion. That
ministered to his conceit and to the dislike of his brothers. Then a part of Joseph's
conceit was native to him. Successful folks are sometimes conceited, but rank failures
are often quite as conceited as the successful. The biggest failure in town can
tell the most successful man how to run his business.

Now conceit is not the worst of vices. It is at least better than an inferiority
complex. But having said that, I am quick to confess that it is not the surest road
to popularity. If you are always telling loud stories of your own achievement, do
not be surprised if Santa Claus wins over you in the popularity contest. Joseph
found that out. He not only flaunted his flashy coat in the eyes of his brothers,
but he told them his great dreams, indicating his vast superiority to themselves.

One day, for instance, he swaggered out into the field where his brothers are
working. They are shocking barley. "I had a dream last night," he tells those
sweating brothers gleefully. "I dreamed that we were all shocking barley and when we had finished all your shocks bowed down to my shocks." "What a nice kid!" said Simon. Then his father came out and he continued his story. "I had another dream even better than that! I dreamed that the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me." That even shocked father Jacob. A spoiled and conceited prig was Joseph!

Third, sad to relate, Joseph was a tale-bearer. There are many things that our fathers thought wrong of which we think lightly. Our sense of sin is very blunted and very dull. But the tale-bearer has not grown more popular with the passing of the years. In some circles that is the only real crime. A tale-bearer may be very interesting, but he is not generally well loved, especially if the tales he tells happen to be about ourselves. Joseph delighted to report to his father the evil deeds of his rough brothers, and the father made the mistake of encouraging him in so-doing.

Fourth, it was thus that Joseph came to be possessed of the heavy handicap of hatred. I think he was all unconscious of this. That was almost more pitiful than if he had known it. He at that time had so little imagination that he could not understand just how ridiculous and unattractive he was making himself. Thus, by the time he was in his early teens he was the best hated member of the family. He might have shrugged his shoulders and said he did not mind, but all of us need every friend we can have.

2. The next scene in the life of Joseph is a tragic one. He has been sent upon a mission by his father. His brothers are away watching their flocks in Dotram. He is sent to investigate their conduct and take them supplies. When one of their number sees him coming across the plain they know him because of his gaudy dress. "That dreamer has come," they say with a sneer. Then they plan to "feed fat the ancient prudge they bear him". No sooner had he arrived than they seized him, stripped from him his gaudy coat and dropped him into an old well. Here in the mud and in the dark the sun and the moon and the stars no longer bowed down to
him. He was just a lonely boy facing ghastly death at the hands of those he had unconsciously taught to hate him.

By and by some merchants came on the scene. These merchants are headed for Egypt. The caravan pauses in the desert for a few words with the sons of Jacob. Then a happy thought strikes Judah. He makes a wise and business-like suggestion. "Let us not kill our brother," he suggests piously. "Let us sell him." Everybody could see the wisdom of that. "By selling him his blood will not be on our hands," Judah explains, "and besides we will be twenty dollars to the good." Many feel there is no harm in taking the pound of flesh if they do not shed any blood in the process.

Having reached that wise decision, young Joseph is pulled out of the well and turned over to his master. From a free nomad of the desert, he has become a slave. As those brothers watch him ride away, they are quite sure they have seen the last of him. There is nothing for them to do but to roll his garments in blood, take them home to his father, and tell him that a wild beast has destroyed him. They will then dust off their hands and forget Joseph forever. But that they could not do because "the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a lucky fellow."

3. The final scene in the life of Joseph is in Egypt. Arrived in that rich and prosperous country, he is sold to a man named Potiphar who is captain of the guard. Soon Joseph has won the confidence of his master. He has been made overseer. All that Potiphar has is in his hands. His transition from a nomad's tent to the lot of a slave has not wrecked him. He is still himself, though I daresay with much of the prig-ishness and the conceit taken out of him.

It was in the house of Potiphar that he came to one of the great temptations of his life. Remember that he was away from home. A great many feel that they can let down away from home in a way that they could not at home. He was in a bad environment. He was in a situation where to do wrong was easy and popular and the way to preferment while to do right was hard and unpopular and fraught with danger. Yet when Potiphar's wife literally threw herself at him, he gave this magnificent answer, "Can I do this great evil and sin against God?" Few finer words than these
were ever spoken.

What was his reward for that magnificent and heroic stand? Here his luck seems to have gone back on him utterly. Nobody shook his hand. Nobody praised him. Nobody promoted him. Instead the enraged woman whose advances he had refused reported him to her husband. Naturally, the outraged husband believed her story. Therefore, young Joseph was thrust into prison. To suffer for wrongdoing is often very instructive. It tells us that we cannot gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. But to suffer for right-doing is often very upsetting. There is a danger that such will cease to believe in the law of sowing and reaping.

In prison Joseph soon comes to be a trusted prisoner in the jail. By and by he does a favor to an officer of Pharaoh who is in disgrace and in prison. By and by that officer is released and as he leaves he gives Joseph an earnest promise that he will not forget his favor. But he does forget for long months. Then one day when the king is greatly perplexed, this one-time prisoner remembers Joseph and recommends him to the king. The king in turn gives him a hearing and is convinced of his wisdom. Thus, Joseph passes from a slave-pen to a palace on the Nile. Thus he becomes a saviour of his own people and a saviour of the greatest nation in the world at that time. Everybody looking at the way Joseph's story ends in triumph would say with the writer that Joseph was a lucky fellow.

III

But what made his luck? Many a youth might have been surrounded by exactly the same circumstances by which Joseph was surrounded and have made an utter mess of his life. Let me remind you again that it is not what life does to you but your response that determines your real success or failure. It was not Joseph's outward success that was his real prosperity. It was not his high position that was his real luck. It was what he was in himself. Joseph would have been great had he lived and died unknown. He was rich in himself. How then did he come to be such a lucky fellow? I think we can mention a few very definite reasons.
1. Joseph achieved his luck because he was willing to work. There is this that you will notice about him—he never sits down and whines. Wherever he finds himself he always finds a job. Having been sold into slavery, he resolves to make the best slave in his master's house. Having been put in prison, he determines to make the best prisoner in jail. He knows he cannot depend on pull; he has none. The man who depends on pull and luck will be lucky if he stays out of the poorhouse. There is no substitute for good, earnest, hard work.

2. Wherever Joseph went he made friends. He learned something by his early blunder. He was the best-hated man in his father's household, but he was the best-loved man in Potiphar's house. He was the most popular man in the city jail. He became the best loved man in the land of Egypt. Here is a man who could have written a far better book than Mr. Carnegie's on "How to Win Friends and Influence People".

3. He refused to be discouraged. Again and again he was knocked down, but always he got up. There is no defeating the man who refuses to be defeated. Today England, thanks in part to her allies, is headed toward victory, but there was a time when her defeat seemed all but certain. How did she win through? For one reason she flatly refused to accept defeat. I can never forget the appeal of Winston Churchill immediately after Dunkirk. "We are now fighting by ourselves alone, but we are not fighting for ourselves alone. Let us so conduct ourselves in these desperate days that if the Empire should live a thousand years they shall look back to this as their finest moment." Joseph came to look back to the blackest hour of his life as one of his finest moments because he refused to surrender.

4. Not only did Joseph refuse to surrender to discouragement, but he refused to surrender to what would have worked an even greater disaster—he refused to surrender to hate. Here was a man who had been greatly wronged. There is no measuring what he suffered when as a youth he was sold into slavery. The iron entered into his very soul that day. Then he must have greatly suffered when he was cast unjustly into prison. What fuel there was in all this to stoke the fires of hatred! How easy it would have been for him to have blamed not only his cruel brothers but God as well. But through it all he kept a kindly heart.
It would be hard to find a finer scene in the Bible or out of it than this. Jacob is now dead. Joseph is the most powerful man in the land of Egypt. His brothers are absolutely in his power. They are sure that this powerful brother of theirs has only withheld his hand for the sake of their father. Now that he is dead he will exact the vengeance for which he has waited so long. Therefore, they come whining to him for forgiveness. And what is Joseph's answer? "Am I in the place of God? You meant it unto evil, but God meant it unto good."

5. This brings us to the supreme secret of Joseph's luck. He kept loyal to God. He met all that life did to him within the will of God. To do that is to make failure impossible. To do that is to make victory sure. That is what Paul meant when he said, "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good." As we go out to meet life it will bring us joy and sorrow, tragedy and triumph, but everything will be grist that comes to your mill if you meet it in the fellowship of God. Meeting life thus, it can be written of you, "God was with him, and he was a lucky fellow."
Then a part of Joseph's trouble was brought on by himself. He was favored on the part of his father went to his son's head. The brilliant boy became intoxicated upon himself. He became a bit of a conceited ass. His attitude was like that of the young rooster who thought that the sun rose each morning just to hear him crow. This unmitigated conceit colored his conduct even gave birth to ambitious dreams, dreams that would have been more than had they been nursed in secret. They became vastly offensive because he insisted upon telling them. One morning, for instance, he swaggered out to say to the elder brothers, "Boys, I had a dream last night. I dreamed that we were all shooting barley and when we had put up our shocks, your shocks all bowed down to mine." Then the boys looked about to see if Jacob was in sight. Seeing him, they kept their hands off the conceited brat, but for that reason alone. Again he told of how the sun and the moon and the eleven stars had bowed down to him. Even Jacob found it difficult to tolerate this dream. As for his brothers, they bit their lips in inward rage and bided their time to get even.

Not only was Joseph a favored and conceited prig, but he was also a talebearer. Talebearers are often quite interesting, but they are never very popular. at least they are not popular with those about whom they talk. Joseph was quite fond of telling his father of the naughty things that his rough and uncouth brothers did. Naturally, this filled them with anger that soon hardened into hate. Thus, little by little these brothers were separated from each other by a chasm that nothing seemed to be able to bridge. Therefore, they made up their minds that at their first opportunity they would get rid of this conceited pest at whatever cost.

Finally, these brothers themselves were most blameworthy of all. It is true their father ought not to have offended them by openly displaying the fact that Joseph was his favorite. That was harmful both to Joseph and to themselves. It is true that Joseph ought to have been more modest. He ought to have had more taste and better sense than to have flouted his importance in the face of his
elder brothers. They on their part ought to have remembered that Joseph was only a boy. They ought to have borne in mind that he was in his salad days and was, therefore, very green in judgment. They ought to have loved him well enough to have been patient with him and to have helped him to a wiser course. But instead they took vengeance upon him with a cruelty that shocks us by its very deviltry to this hour.

II

What direction did this vengeance take? How did Joseph come to pay for his youthful folly?

One day when Joseph was some seventeen years of age, his father sent him on a mission to his brothers. These brothers were keeping their flocks in the neighborhood of Dothan. As they looked across the plain one morning they saw that they would soon have a visitor. A little later they recognized this visitor. They could tell him by his swagger. They could recognize him by his colorful coat. "The dreamer is coming," they said with bitter scorn and contempt. Then they looked knowingly at each other and said, "Now is our time." Therefore, no sooner had he arrived, then they laid violent hands on him, tore from him his colorful garment, and thrust him down into an old dry well to die. In this black pit no shocks bowed to Joseph and the few stars that he could see in the outer sky not only refused to do obeisance but seemed to be totally unmindful of him.

But thanks to Judah, Joseph was not left in this old well. With a fine business instinct, this elder brother decided that instead of killing him it would be better to sell him as a slave. His argument for this was shot through at once with what seemed to him real piety as well as sound economics. "What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood?" asked wise Judah. "Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him for he is our brother and our flesh." By taking this course he seems to say, "We shall not only be guiltless, but we shall be twenty dollars to the good." So Joseph was sold into slavery and
as these brothers watched him disappear across the plain, they dusted their hands saying, "That's that! We shall not be bothered by him any more."

But this was not the end. It was only the beginning. These brothers who thought they were sending Joseph to an untimely death were sending him away to that great University of Hard Knocks, whose colors are black and blue, where he was trained for future usefulness. The road that they thought would end in oblivion led to a place of prominence that has made the name of their brother immortal. The long trek that they thought was to bring Joseph to a slave-pen led to a palace on the Nile. "The Lord was with Joseph," says the record, "and he prospered." He prospered in the prizes that he won. He prospered still more in what he became.

He became about the most Christlike man in the Old Testament. He became the savior of a great nation and incidentally of his own people as well. His cruel brothers literally kicked him upstairs. The greatest boost he ever had was born of the heaviest blow that foes and hate could deal him.

III

Now how was Joseph able to change this evil into good? How did he succeed in making this tremendous loss into immeasurable gain? How did he turn this dire calamity into capital? This is a question of utmost importance because we all have our hard knocks of one kind or another. Sooner or later, however sheltered we are, some kind of heavy blow brings us to our knees if it does not lay us flat upon our faces. How we get a boost from our knocks? Let us see how Joseph managed.

He did not win because everything that happens to us is for the best. There are many things that happen in our world every day that are not for the best. To affirm otherwise is to throw dust in the eyes of reason and to spit in the face of commonsense. It is to make faith in God all but impossible.

No, did Joseph win because out of every tragedy there comes an inevitable progress. That is not true. There is no inevitable progress. Before the outburst of the first World War there rose a large group who believed that progress
was a law of life regardless of the conduct of the individual or the group. Passing events have torn that complacent conviction into shreds! There is, I repeat, no inevitable progress. In spite of all our opportunities, we as individuals and as a civilization may turn to barbarism and savagery if we persist in making wrong choices.

No more are we to conclude that Joseph found victory because of his fortunate circumstances. Circumstances have some influence upon us. But we are neither made nor unmade by them. This is evidenced by the fact that two men may pass through exactly the same circumstances, one may become stronger while the other is wrecked.

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Acts we read that Peter was cast in prison but that the angel of the Lord smote him and that the chains fell off his hands. Toward the end of the chapter we read that the angel of the Lord smote Herod and he died. So far as we know, the same angel smote these two men in the same fashion. To one the smiting brought freedom and to the other it brought death. "It is not in our stars, dear Brutus, but in our selves that we are underlings." In other words it is not what life does to us that determines our good or ill—it is our response to what life does. How then, I repeat, did Joseph find a boost from these hard knocks?

1. He refused to surrender. He refused to give over the fight and quit.

No doubt that was a serious temptation. As he went away into slavery, he perchance said to himself, "I have tried to live right. I have tried to do the decent and fair thing, but what has it got me? Here I am a slave. A little later he found himself in Potipher's house face to face with a great temptation. Here, again he might have said to himself, "What is the use? It is safe to be unclean and unsafe to be decent. Why not take the easy way?" But even though cast off by men and seemingly foreseen of God, Joseph still believed that it was better to be loyal than disloyal. He believed that it was better to be clean than unclean. Though tortured by doubt, he lived up to the best that he knew. In his blackest hour
he refused to surrender.

2. Joseph refused to be a hater. He refused to become soured in his soul. What a fight he must have had to conquer his hate. When these brothers of his came cringing into his presence how easy it would have been for him to have said, "Why do you come whining to me now, praying for forgiveness? Did you listen to my prayers? I know you had some cause to resent me, but you should have remembered that I was just a boy. You should have pitied my folly and given me a chance, but you refused. All right, it was your time yesterday. It is mine today." But Joseph refused to kindle the fires of hell in his own soul by giving way to hate.

3. Refusing to hate, he refused also to seek revenge. He refused to try to get even with the men who had sought to ruin him. It is said that revenge is sweet yet I have never seen a single man who indulged in revenge who seemed to have found any abiding sweetness. Take some of the great haters of literature. There is Roger Shillings-the Scarlet Letter. There is also worthy Edmond Dantes in The Count of Monte Cristo. These tracked their victims down like bloodhounds. It is terrible to be the victim of hate such as theirs, but it is infinitely more terrible to be the possessor of such hate.

Joseph, refusing to hate, refused to become an avenger. He refused to assume the throne of Almighty God. "Am I in the place of God?" he asked with sanity. Are you? What right have you to judge? We must leave all that to God. "Vengeance belongeth unto me. I will repay, saith the Lord."

4. Not only did Joseph refuse to hate and seek for vengeance, but he freely forgave. It was that that made his salvation possible. It was that that made him a blessing to the world and to all the subsequent centuries. It was that that made it possible for him to live within the will of God. Our God is a God of love. No hater can have fellowship with Him. If any man says that he loves God while he hates his brother he is a liar. That is the word of the apostle. It would be just as true had it come from the lips of an atheist as from the lips of an inspired writer. Without this forgiveness God could never have changed Joseph's evil into good.
GETTING A BOOST FROM OUR KNOCKS

How was Joseph able to forgive?

"But I cannot forgive," an embittered women said to me not long ago. But that is not true. Those who cannot forgive cannot be forgiven. Joseph might have said that, but he said the opposite. How did he find it possible to forgive these that it would have been so easy to hate for nobody can we hate quite so desperately as our own kin when they do us wrong.

He did not find forgiveness possible because he slurred over the facts. He did not fling a handful of snow on a bit of blackness and then call it white. He did not cover up a cruel deed of wickedness and call it good. He did not excuse these brothers by saying that they meant no harm. There was nothing to be gained referring to the facts. Instead of forgetting the sin by that. Instead he faced the fact and made them face it that they were out to "We thought he against me," he declared frankly. The sin will get him. They want his ruin, that and nothing more. This is his plain declaration. He realized that you want to give me ruin. It was that fact that I am alone and "So meant it for evil." Dear brother I hast to you love, but sin. I your fate had been

How then, I repeat, could he forgive? He opened his eyes to the fact that the evil that was intended was changed into good. He kept it before him that the worst thing that ever happened to him became the best. He fixed his thought upon the fact that the blackest night of his life issued in the most radiant day. He bore in mind that the dark tunnel through which he passed in his early youth led out under the blue skies of fellowship with God and the joy of service such as dwelt in his heart. Now were born to him the realization that this evil had been changed self was strong and brave, but because God had worked with him. "Ye meant it unto me against me, but God meant it unto good."

This loving intention on the part of God toward Joseph is not unique. What-ever of good or ill comes into your life, God always means it for good. How foolish it would have been, therefore, for Joseph to have blamed God for what his cruel brothers had done to him. How foolish it is for me and you! Yet we do that again and again. A young woman came to my study sometime ago to tell me a tragic story. She had been wronged and that by a minister. Since then, she had hated all ministers. She had hated the church. She had even flung away from God. But
how foolish to blame God for a wrong against which he blazed with far greater indignation than she herself. Joseph refused to blame a good God for the deeds of evil men. Disturbed by the realization that God had brought triumph out of tragedy, good she knew that very wicked and very false, He was not through with them out of evil. He could not hate the men who had bound him there. He could not feel to God had changed that evil into good. But that which above all else he could not hate them, because their wrong had brought him wealth. He could not hate them, because, even the One that had been working on his side was also the Father of those who had wronged him. Therefore, he could not be so ungrateful as to wound the One that had brought him freedom and enrichment by hating one of His children, the One that had brought him freedom and enrichment by hating one of His children.

Now your problem may not be that of Joseph. In order to walk with God Joseph had to get rid of hate. Maybe with you it is some other sin. Maybe yours is doubt, maybe it is rebellion, maybe it is bitterness at the hard fate that life has dealt you. But whatever it is, if you meet it in the will of God, He will change your losses into gains, your direst poverty will become your supreme wealth. You can say to whatever foes that face you, "God meant it unto good." This is the case because beyond a peradventure, "All things work together for good to them that love God."
JOSEPH AND DAVID

"Can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Genesis 39:9

"The sword devoureth one as well as another."

II Samuel 11:26

I.

There are certain qualities which Joseph and David shared. In fact, there was much that they had in common.

1. They were both unusually fine animals. They were splendid men physically. Had you met either of them on the street you would have looked at them the second time. After they had passed you, you would doubtless have turned to look once more. They were both fine physical specimens. Both were genuinely handsome. They carried with them an unusual physical charm. It made them both the envy of their immediate families in the admiration of the world outside.

2. Along with these physical assets they both possessed rare intellectual ability. They had power of leadership and of organization. Joseph by dint of sheer worth and ability went from a slave pen in a prison cell to be the virtual leader of the greatest nation in the world. David came from the obscurity of the sheep fold to be the leader of his people and king for the central figure of the Golden Age of his nation. They were therefore men of acceptable ability.

3. They both possessed personal magnificence to a superb degree. They had
that indefinable something called charm. From what I have heard about Mr. Carnegie he could certainly have sat at their feet to learn "how to win friends and influence people." You will notice this about Joseph, in whatever circle he found himself he soon became its favorite. The one exception to this was his own home. Here his early conceit alienated his older brothers from him. But wherever he went after this everybody trusted him. Men instinctively brought their sorrows and burdens to him.

But, charming as he was, he did not in this respect surpass David. From the first glimpse we get of this young chap, dashing in one day from the sheep fold to be anointed as the future king of Israel, our hearts go out to him. So did the hearts of the people of his day. Princeely Jonathan had no sooner met him than he came to love him as his own soul. One day when he was hiding in the fastnesses of the mountains he became thirsty. He spoke of how fine it would be if he could only have a drink out of the old well by the gate of Bethlehem. There were three ruffians that heard him. At the risk of their lives they went and came back a little later, each with a drink from this well. These men knew how to be popular. It is a lesson well worth learning. Of course, one may buy popularity at too great a price. But it is worth paying a great deal to be popular. This is the case because the measure of our capacity to help another is largely based on the measure of the love he has for us. Both these men were greatly loved.

4. The fourth quality they had in common was religion. Both of them had had a pious upbringing. From their youth they had been taught to pray. Each had in his life in an early day a fine sense of God. When Joseph's life fell in ruins about him, when he was sold into slavery, the author who tells this story never forgets to mention this consoling and bracing fact that God was with him. When we see David facing his great battle with Goliath, he faces it as a man of faith. "I am come," he declares, "in the name of the Lord of Hosts." David sinned greatly, but at their best both men were men of a beautiful religious faith.

5. Finally, they had this in common. Both were men subject to temptation. In that we are all like them. Now the major temptation of one man may not be that of
another. What might trip me up and prove my undoing might not appeal to you at all. But it so happens that the greatest crisis in the life of each of these men was the same kind of temptation. It was a temptation to the sin of the flesh, a temptation to break the seventh commandment. Both these men had to meet that universal experience, they had to face temptation.

Now while temptation is universal, while there is no possible hiding from it, that does not mean that we are to meet it carelessly. It is futile to hide from it. During the middle ages those desiring to be saints sought to do so by hiding from the world. They would dodge temptation, but often they found temptation more severe in the cloister than they did out in the world. We are not to go seeking, we are not to be forever hiding. We are to walk the path of duty trusting in God and praying, "Lead us not into temptation." But in whatever spirit we may live, temptation is unavoidable.

II.

But while these two men were alike in many respects they were vastly different in their reaction to the great temptation that came to both of them. While one of them triumphed the other went down in sad and tragic defeat. And bear in mind that this was not the case because one had a conscience and the other did not. It was not the case because one was a strong man and the other a weakling. They were both strong. The difference in their repentance to this compelling temptation was due to other reasons.

1. When David met his temptation he was idle, while Joseph was busy. Times of idleness are always times of danger. There is an old proverb that says, "An idle brain in the devil's work shop." There is another, "The devil finds some work for idle hands to do." The time that most people go wrong is not when they are in the thick of the fight. It is when the fight is over, or has not begun.

"'Twas not in the day of battle that we threw away the sword,

But in the lonely hours of watching by the river at the ford,
The waters lapped, the night winds blew,  
Full armed the fear was born and grew,  
There we were flying ere we knew, from spectators in the night."

Nature abhors a vacuum. If you do not fill it with good you are mighty apt to fill it with evil.

Joseph had a better chance at victory because he was busy. This is not theory, this is practical, sound sense. When temptation of any kind comes, especially when this particular type of temptation is upon you, there is nothing better than to get busy at some worthwhile task. It takes your mind off of the forbidden. Work is a help and safeguard against any form of temptation. "Are you never afraid in battle?" one asked perhaps the bravest of Napoleon's soldiers. "No," came the answer, "I am too busy fighting." David met his temptation at a time of idleness, Joseph met his when he was busy.

2. David faced his temptation in a spirit of moral evasiveness, while Joseph faced his without blinking the facts. The fact that David began to rationalize in the face of his temptation is seen by the smug apology he makes for the death of his wronged friend, Uriah. When his sin of adultery had led to the further sin of murder when he had had Uriah put at the forefront of the battle, he saw his death would be assured. He sought to salve his conscience with this word, -"The sword devoureth one as well as another." What a ghastly and dangerous thing to say. He had killed him as really as if he had stabbed him to the heart with his own hand. But here he is rationalizing about it and trying to explain it away.

Because he acted in this fashion at the end we may assume that he did so at the beginning. In fact, this moral evasiveness was largely responsible for his downfall. Instead of calling the deed that he was tempted to do by its right name, instead of facing the fact that he was cheating, cheating his friend, cheating the one involved, cheating his family, cheating his nation, he told himself that it was perfectly natural. He reasoned that if God did not intend him to give way to these appetites why did he give them in the beginning. There is no wrong that we cannot argue into a right if
we set ourselves resolutely to the task.

But Joseph refused to rationalize. He called a spade a spade. He said the thing that I am tempted to do is a wicked thing, a ghastly dirty thing. It is a wrong to my Master. He has trusted me, I cannot afford as a gentleman to betray his trust. It is a wrong to the silly woman that has thrown herself at me. Above all else, and before all else, it is a sin against God.

3. Finally, David forgot the consequences while Joseph refused to forget. We live in an ordered world. Every deed has its afterward. When the perpetrator would fain be done with that sin, that sin is not done with him who committed it. David got his gaze so firmly fixed on the one thing that he desired that he forgot all else. He forgot all human relationships. He forgot God. Joseph refused to let this one desire absorb his whole attention. He looked at his fellows. Above all else he looked at God. With the result that he stood while David fell.

III.

Look finally at the contrast in the consequences, of their different ways of meeting temptation.

1. Look first at David. Having taken the fatal plunge, though a brave man he became a victim of fear. Every sinner turns loose enemies on his own track. Enemies that will not let him be at peace. "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked." He began at once to see that his sin had immediate consequences. The woman's husband had to be reckoned with. He tried to deal with him diplomatically and failed. Then from betraying his friend he went to his actual murder. That is one of the most ghastly crimes of which we read in all the Bible.

Having committed this crime David set to salve his conscience with soft excuses. But he could not get away with it. He was naturally a sunny man, but in spite of all the soft lies that he told himself, darkness settled down upon him. In spite of all excuses his once springtime had become a barren desert. "My moisture
has turned into the drought of summer," he sobs. He tried to pray but could make nothing of it because he was not willing to confess his sin and give it up. Thus he found himself tortured by the pangs of hell.

His story reminds us of that of Hamlet's uncle. This uncle, you remember had murdered his brother, Hamlet's father, in order to gain the throne. Remorse is torturing him. Out of sheer agony he is forced to his knees. He is trying to pray, but his prayer gets him nowhere because he wont repent.

"But, O what form of prayer can serve my turn,

Forgive me my foul murder,
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen,
May one be pardoned and retain the offense?
In the corrupted currents of this world?
Offenses guilded hand may shove by justice
But to us not so above,
There is no shuffling, the action lies,
In his true nature, and ourselves compelled,
To the teeth and forehead of our crimes
To give an evidence,
And oft is seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the land
What then, what rest? try what repentence can.
What can it not? Yet what can it when one cannot repent
O wretched plight, O limed soul that struggling to be free
Art more engaged."

Then one day a friend went to see David and told him the story of the poor man's lamb. It was a pointed and tactful story. David at war with himself wanted
to do something virtuous. So he arose in rage and said, "The man that did this crime shall be put to death." Then Nathan said, "Thou art the man." I do not think he said it vindictively. I do not think he hissed it at David through clinched teeth. I think he said it out of a loving and broken heart. And David's heart was broken. His knees went weak. He clutched at God's skirts in genuine repentance and prayed that prayer that we pray still, "Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving kindness."

What was the result? That happened which always happens when we confess our sin and turn from him. Then and there David was forgiven. Soon he was expressing his joy. Then he sang that song, "Blessed is that man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." No sooner had David turned in hate from his sin than God said to him through his prophet, "The Lord has put away thy sin." David experienced the wonder and miracle of forgiveness.

But here is an arresting fact that we must not forget. While God saved David from his sin, he did not save him from the consequences of his sin. That foul deed that David had done passed out beyond the reach of his hand, and beyond the power to control. It made his son, Amon, into a rapist. The victim of his lust was his own sister. It put his destroying hand on handsome Absalom. There is no measuring the suffering, the shame, the heartache, that came from that one sad fall.

You and I may sin away our best years, we may sow our wild oats and continue to do so till we come to the very sunset. Even then, if we repent, God will forgive us. But his forgiveness cannot restore the years that we have wasted. His forgiveness thus cannot give us back the lives that we have tarnished. I went to see a woman sometime ago who was dying of poison, self administered. She hadn't taken enough to kill her quickly. Therefore, she lingered for some ten or twelve days. But she knew she was going to die. She was penitent. I told her of a Saviour who was able to meet her needs. And I think she died in peace. But though Christ saved her from her sin, her repentance did not destroy the poison that was taking her
Years ago there was a splendid man who lived on a farm close to ours. This man was the father of a large family. But his responsibilities never sobered him till late in life. When he was some sixty years of age and all his children were grown he turned to God. I think he was genuinely converted. He became a beautiful and humble Christian. I have seen him stand upon his feet in the old village church and sob as if his heart would break. Why those tears? Though he himself had turned to God, his repentance did not save his children. The lives that he might have touched with transforming power had passed now beyond his reach. David was saved from his sin, therefore, but not from its consequences.

2. But how about Joseph too? At first, so far as the outward I can see, Joseph's triumph over temptation brought him nothing but disaster. The woman he had spurned showed that the poet was right when he said, "Hell hath no fury like a woman's scorn." She told her husband how she had been insulted. And Joseph found himself stripped of all the advantages that he had won, and thrust into a prison cell. Loyalty to God does not always bring immediate temporal benefit. We sometimes resent this. We get half angry at God because when we ask for bread he refuses and gives us a stone.

But while Joseph went to prison he did not stay there. Had he done so, he would have still been rich. It is impossible really to imprison a man with a soul as free as that of Joseph. But because Joseph met his temptation in prison as outside in the will of God, that dungeon became a roadway to a larger freedom. It led him to a palace on the Nile, and enabled him to be a savior of a nation and the savior of his own people. "The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered." His outward prosperity was incidental. The real prosperity, that which abides to this day was the inward prosperity of rightness with God. David went from his yielding to a greater weakness, Joseph went to a greater strength.

We face the fact then that like these two men we must face temptation. If we
stand we must meet it aggressively and not idly. We must meet it with a frank facing of the facts and not with spiritual evasiveness. Never let us fool ourselves by thinking that yielding is a necessity. Never let us fool ourselves by believing that any man was ever the richer for his sin. Let us rather face this unanswerable truth—the only safe time to repent is before we sin, before we have wasted our lives.

We read with appreciation of how the Prodigal came back after he had wasted his substance with riotous living. Thank God for the other prodigals that have come in this fashion. But did you ever think how many fine chaps that he met on the way down that he did not see on the way back? You may spurn God tonight and find Him ten years from now or twenty years from now. But believe me! the salvation that he offers can never mean as much again in all the eternities as it can mean tonight. Other opportunities may come, but never another as good as this. Therefore, I close with this bracing appeal,—"Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation."
"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel"...Gen. 49:4

The scene is a solemn and impressive one. An old man is upon his death bed. His children stand about him and he is delivering to them his parting charge. To Reuben, his eldest, he speaks first. "Reuben, thou art my first born, the beginning of my excellency and my strength. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Tragic words these. They are all the more pathetic when we realize that they came from lips tender with love, that they are soaked in the tears of a disappointed father.

I

Why did Reuben fail?

His failure did not grow out of this prophecy on the part of his father. I realize that there is some truth in that old contention that if you give a man a bad name he will justify it. It is much easier to go wrong when everybody expects you to. It is easier to be dishonest when you know no one trusts you. Many a man has found it easier to go down because of a lack of confidence. But this was not the secret of Reuben's failure. He had failed before this prophecy was ever uttered.

Neither did Reuben fail for lack of opportunity. Of all of Jacob's sons, his chances were the best. He was the first born. He was, therefore, the natural leader of the clan. Had he claimed his birthright, he might have exerted an influence over his brethren that would have caused the future generations to have called him "blessed". But he did not take advantage of his opportunity. He threw away his scepter of power, abdicated his throne, and deliberately uncrowned himself.

Neither did he fail for lack of ability. The most tragic failures that we know are never brought about by this cause. Reuben had ability enough. He failed to use it. That is what makes his failure so tragic. And the greater the ability the deeper the tragedy if that ability is thrown away. Had he failed through stupidity it would not have been so pathetic for that would not have been his fault. But to fail when he had the power to make a success, that leaves him without excuse.

Nor did Reuben fail because he was extremely vicious and wicked. He was far better than some among his brothers. Of course to deliberately make a choice of the lowest and persist in that choice, is sure to bring moral doom. But this was not the case with Reuben. When his brothers were on the point of murdering Joseph
it was Reubin alone who had pity on him. It was Reubin that saved his life. It is true that he stood for him in a rather weak and ineffective way. He did not succeed in saving him from being sold into slavery, but at least his intentions were good and his disposition toward his brother was kind.

Why then did he fail? He failed because he was a weakling. He had no stamina, no steadfastness, no strength. His father put the cause in the briefest possible way. He was unstable as water. He was unreliable, untrustworthy. That is, he failed through weakness. And that I dare say is the cause of more failures than almost any other one thing in the world.

"As weak as water" is an expression we sometimes hear today. It is one that we learn from Jacob. That is what he said about his son. And when he said that he said about the worst thing that could be said. For to be this weak is to be weak indeed. This is true because water is always and everywhere a creature of circumstance. There are times when it seems magnificently strong. Out at sea it often spits its rage into the very face of heaven. It plays with mighty ships as if they were mere toys. It sends raging waves to battle with ragged rocks. But this it does not through a strength born of itself. The battle that it is fighting is not a willing battle. It is being driven to it by the lash of the wind like a poor mercenary soldier.

Much of the machinery of the world today is being run by water in the form of steam. It is a source of endless power, but that power is not born of the water itself. It is born of the fire that is in the fire box under the water. That same water and put it in a different situation, then instead of becoming steam that makes power it will become ice and wreck the machinery.

Water is most accommodating in that it takes the color of its environment. Put it in a red glass and it becomes red, in a brown and it becomes brown. Put it in a square vessel and it is square. Put it in a round vessel and it is round. Nothing can adapt itself to the situation more easily than water. It is at home in any crowd. It is pious at prayer meeting and capable of giving a good account of itself at a drinking bout.

Now since water is purely a creature of circumstance, it always takes the course of least resistance. If it is in a land locked basin it is perfectly still. If it is in the heights it will wend its way toward the depths. And even on its way down it will select the easiest possible way to get down. And any creature or anything that takes the line of least resistance always goes down hill.

II

What did this weakness cost Reubin?

First it cost him his finer and higher possibil-
A man of Reubin might only be willing thus his weakness. There was a noble man out ahead of Reubin. A man of strength, a man of rugged courage and usefulness. Reubin might have attained and won that fine manhood if he had only been willing to pay the price. But he humored his weakness. Thus his weakness increased and his strength diminished.

What a pity that Reubin did not take himself in hand and ask whether his self-indulgent course was leading him. What a pity that you do not ask that same question. Are you going up or down? Are you headed toward your higher possibilities or toward your worst? I press this question because none can be more important. The biggest fact about you tonight is not how far you have climbed toward the heights nor how far you have dipped toward the depths. The biggest fact is the direction of your life. When I was a boy on the farm I used to admire the goslings. A gosling is a beautiful creature. To that anyone will agree who knows. But while I admired this beautiful gosling, I could never grow extremely enthusiastic about it, because I always had it in the back of my mind that if this gosling kept on the way it was going, it would surely become a goose. It was headed in that direction.

On the other hand I did not admire that young mocker in the least. He was poorly dressed and seemed little more than a big blind mouth. But I was wise enough to know that he was facing toward a better day. I knew he was soon to enter upon a concert tour that would make the thickets and the hedgerows joyous with music. Reubin refused his finer possibilities. He walked the easy road. When he faced the task that he ought to have done, he shirked it. And his strength for burden bearing became a little less. When he faced the forbidden, he yielded, and his weakness increased. At last there came a day when sin entered his door without knocking. And the man who might have been strong found himself an utter weakling.

How many men are tormented by the face of the man that they might have been? "I am not so bad," is what a man said the other day. And that was true in a sense. He was kind, at least that was true when he was sober. But in spite of his kindness he was allowing his appetite for drink to rob him of his business and to rob him of his friends. He was allowing that indulgence to send him night after night to make a hell out of his humble little home. This he did, not because he wished to torture anybody. He was just weak, that was all. But that was enough to wreck him and to have him to be constantly tortured by the thought of the man he might have been.

2. Not only did weakness rob Reubin of the privilege of becoming the man that he might have been, but in so doing it robbed him of the privilege of rendering the services he might have rendered. When Joseph came that day, had Reubin stood with the courage and strength with which he might have stood, that splendid boy would have never been thrown into the pit and sold as a slave. Had he stood as he
should have stood, his father would have been saved many years of bitter grief and heartache. Had he stood with the strength that should have been his, both himself and his brothers would have been saved from endless shame and fear and remorse.

Our weakness not only impairs our usefulness, but so often it makes us into a positive menace to others. That girl whose name is not spoken except in secret prayers to God brought shame on the home. This she did not in malice, but in weakness. That son who makes his mother wish that he had not been born is not so devilish as he is weak. That husband who is robbing his children of a chance and his wife of her happiness and her hope is not malicious. He is a weakling. Thus our weakness not only robs ourselves but it robs others as well.

III

Is there a cure for weakness? Has Reubin a chance? Have the countless Reubins that walk our streets today a chance? I answer without the slightest hesitation that they have. Thank God they have. There is a way by which cowards may become courageous. Weakness may be changed into strength.

1. The first step toward the realization of this high goal is a firm belief in its possibility. That it is possible is a clear teaching of the Word of God. The writer to the Hebrews tells us very plainly of those who out of weakness were made strong. And Jesus tells His Apostle, and ourselves as well, that His grace is sufficient, for us and that His strength is made perfect in weakness. That is the more weak we are the more fully we may avail ourselves of the strength and grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. In fact it is only as we come to Him with a sense of weakness that we can obtain His strength at all.

We may believe in the possibility of the weakling becoming a strong man not only because such is the teaching of the Word of God, but also because that is the experience of a vast number. How many there are living today who are conscious of the fact that as they themselves have undertaken to follow Christ, that as they have trusted Him, there has come to them a new energy for the performing of their tasks and a new power to resist temptation. How many have found themselves facing difficulties and dangers that made them afraid with the courage to which they had formerly been strangers.

What a striking example we have of this in the Apostle Peter. When Jesus met him He said to him, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas". Now had I been by and known Simon as his neighbors knew him, I should doubtless have smiled wisely and said to myself, "No, you will never make anything out of Simon. Simon is as unstable as water". And many a time Simon failed after he began to follow Jesus. Some times it looked as if his failure were going to be final. It looked as if he were going to end the same weakling that he began. He does not impress us when we hear him lying, through cowardice, on the night of the betrayal of Jesus. But
when six weeks later we see him before the Sanhedrin and hear him say, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to harken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye." We know that Simon has at last become a rock.

2. The second necessity if we would gain strength out of weakness is to begin here and now to follow Him who is the source of all strength. Begin at once to say "No" to your fears. Begin at once to battle with your weakness. That is how Peter won. When Christ passed and said, "Follow me", Peter arose and made a beginning. He was not made into a moral giant all at once. You will not be. But the very moment you decide to begin that very moment a new courage, and a new power will come into you.

3. Then if you would win in this battle for victory over weakness you must persist. Remember just as every yielding to sin makes you weaker, so every victory makes you stronger. There is a belief among certain tribes of the South Sea islands that when they kill an enemy, the strength of that slain enemy enters into themselves. This is certainly true in the moral realm. Every moral foe that you destroy makes you a stronger man.

If you find yourself defeated, begin again. That is what Peter did. He fell many times, but he was always ready to renew the fight. I saw a mother out walking with her little child the other day who was just learning to walk. He snatched loose from his mother, went a few steps, and fell. He got up and started and fell again. He got up and started and fell again. Again he started and again he fell, this time in the only muddy place in the street. He splashed his clean dress and clean face and even his mother's temper. "What are you going to do next", she said not without anger. "I am going to get up" was his prompt reply. And if you will be thus wise, nothing can defeat you.

"Did you tackle the trouble that came your way
With resolute heart and cheerful,
Or hide your face from the light of day
With craven soul and fearful?
Oh, a trouble's a ton or a trouble's an ounce
Or a trouble is what you make it.
It's not the fact you are hurt that counts
But only how did you take it.

You are beaten to earth, well, well, what then?
Get up with a smiling face,
It's nothing against you to fall down flat,
But to lie there, that's disgrace.
Why the harder you fall, the higher you bounce
Be proud of your blackened eye.
It's not the fact you are licked that counts,
But how did you fight and why.
And if you be down to the death, what then
If you battled the best you could?
If you played your part in the world of men,
The Great Critic will call it good.
Death comes with a crawl or comes with a pounce.
But whether he's slow or spry
It's not the fact that you are dead that counts.
But only how did you die."

There are two roads that stretch out from where you sit. One is the upper road. If you walk it, you will win your highest possibilities. The other is the road that dips downward. It is a broad and easy road. But it ends in disaster and failure. Why not begin tonight to climb upward to your better self. Why not follow Christ for the achieving of your largest possibilities".

"To every man there openeth
A Way and Ways and a Way.
The High Soul climbs the High Way
And the Low Soul gropes the Low.
And in between on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go".
Here is another story coming out of the long gone past. It wears such a queer costume that it is not amazing that many look at it with questioning eyes when they look at all. It tells of a woman who warned to flee from the doom of a certain city giving reluctant obedience. She was commanded no only to leave the city but not once to look back. If she did so it would be at the peril of her life.

But this woman had lived in Sodom for a score of years. When she and her husband had moved into the city, they doubtless had a far firmer grip on their faith than they have now. Not only had they moved into Sodom but Sodom had moved into them. But now they must leave. She must not give a single backward glance at those scenes that held some tragic and perhaps some joyous memories.

Probably she began her journey toward the heights in good faith, but before setting out she had delayed as long as possible. The new life had offered little appeal. We cannot be too critical of her. There are many both within and without the church who commit the same blunder. They believe that Jesus has come "that we might have life and have it more abundantly" but they seem to want to delay in receiving this life as long as possible.

Walking thus on humbling and reluctant feet, this woman soon fell behind. Then she decided to stop and take one good look at the city that she was
leaving. As she did this, she was turned into a pillar of salt.

What an amazing story. How incredible it seems. What a travesty on the love of a fatherly God. What a heavy penalty for such a small crime. No wonder that many attempt to throw this old folk story into the waste basket.

But before we do this it might be well to look at it a bit more closely. It might be well also to remember that other eyes than ours have looked upon this frozen face with its sightless eyes turned toward a blackened ruin where there was once a city. Jesus read this story and saw in it an impressive message for His own day and for ours. Therefore, he said in words vibrant with earnestness, "Remember Lot's wife."

Because then we have some confidence in the sanity and common sense of our Lord, let us look anew at this story. This woman was a part of a great family that has enriched the world. She with her husband had joined Abraham in his quest for a new and better day. But when it became necessary for Lot and Abraham to separate, she joined her husband in a wrong decision. This led them to settle in a city that was rotten ripe with destruction. But when doom was near and they were urged to leave the city, though they did not flatly refuse, the woman gave such a half-hearted response that she never reached her goal.

What then would our Lord have us remember about this woman? Her life haunts us with one definite lesson. It tells in language simple enough for any child to understand it the tragedy of indecision. There are few defects that we can have that are more ruinous than an incapacity to make up our minds. There are few qualities of character so helpful as the capacity to decide.
No wonder, therefore, that Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no." Do not say yes that is twenty-five per cent no. Do not say no that is fifty per cent yes. "Learn to say no," said wise Spurgeon, "it will be worth more to you than knowing how to read Latin." I am told that a few years ago, two partners in business were discussing the advisability of finding a fit young man to take into their employee with a view to a future partner. These men were passing by the campus of Baylor University. A group of young men were planning a night of adventure. They heard one chap say decisively, "No, I tell you no. If you want to do that it is your business, but I wont." These two men naturally found that bit of argument interesting. They found it so interesting that I am told they sought out this young man and made his acquaintance and he later became the partner for which they were seeking.

I.

The first tragedy of indecision I mention is wretchedness. Put it positively. We ought to be able to make up our mind because we can find our highest happiness in no other way.

1. Decision is necessary to happiness in every department of life. Our most restless and wretched moments, generally speaking, are those when we are undecided. Some people can work themselves into a veritable fever trying to decide whether they should accept this date or that, make this trade or not make it, accept this position or refuse it. Psychiatrists tell us that many of the nervous breakdowns that are taking place today are not from overwork so much as from over-worry by people who cannot decide.

There are not a few men in the Army today who are more at peace than they will perhaps ever be again. This is the case because they themselves
do not have to make up their minds. Their decisions are made for them. The burden of choice is for a certain type of mind. A burden that is difficult to bear.

Of course, we could save ourselves a great deal of trouble if we would fence off certain questions that are settled permanently. The truth is that all of us have some such decisions that do not have to be repeated. I never have to argue with myself as to whether I will rob a bank or not rob a bank. I never have to argue with myself as to whether I will swear or not swear. There are a great many decisions that have been made permanently.

In the average American home, there is no argument as to whether the children shall go to school on week days. There is no argument as to whether the father will go to business or the mother will attend to the duties of her home. But there are other questions just as important that we leave open and must be argued over and fought over week after week. It is an open question with many Sunday after Sunday whether they will attend church or not. Such questions as this ought to be settled permanently just as you would settle permanently whether you will be honest or dishonest. In failing to settle them you are simply diminishing your chances of happiness rather than increasing them.

2. But if indecision makes for wretchedness in the ordinary paths of life, this wretchedness reaches its climax when it has reference to God. This is the case because we are made for God and are never at peace until we are at peace in Him. But for this fact, the man who definitely decided once and for all that he would have nothing to do with God might find real happiness. It does approach nearer to it than a man who comes to no decision at all. Yet it is a fact that no man can be as bad as he wants to be. However we set ourselves against God, there are times when He disturbs us. There are times when even the worst of men look restless and wretched toward the heights and long to be different. Did you ever stand on the shores of the
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sea and gaze out across its restless waters. Its waves are never quite at peace. The sea climbs upon the shore at high tide to fall back again at low. What is the matter? That sea is being played upon by two opposing forces. The heights are calling to it. When it seems inclined to respond, then our muddy world throws its arms around it and says stay with me. Then man even at his worst is like that restless sea. He is tortured by his indecision until he decides for God.

This is the experience of not one individual but of the race. It belongs to the worst of men, it belongs to the best. Here is an ancient poet on his knees. Listen to his prayer: "Unite my heart to fear thy name." He fears God but not whole-heartedly. Here is another prayer for the same purpose: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to the word." His is the pain of a divided heart. Here still is another cry, about the bitterest we hear on the pages of the New Testament: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" He is wretched because the thing that he longs to do he fumbles and the thing he vows not to do, he does. If, therefore, we are to find real happiness, we must be decisive. We must be whole-hearted in our allegiance to God.

II.

We ought to be decisive in the second place because it is only thus that we can realize the maximum of our power and of our usefulness. It matters not how much ability you have if you never learn to focus, if you never bring that ability to bear on a definite objective then it is of little value. An old proverb: "To the ship bound to no harbor no wind is possible." But the world sets out of the way of a man who knows where he is going and how he is going to get there.

How much fine ability is wasted for lack of power to decide. Years
ago my brother and I were making our way through the fields when we came to a little rivulet that we could usually step across but the spring rains had come and that little rivulet was now some ten or twelve feet wide. But we had to cross it so we decided to jump it. We were good at that. I was to jump first. I gave myself a fine running start but just as I was prepared to make the leap my brother changed his mind and cried, "Stop, stop." I lost my decisiveness with the result that I hit right in mid-stream.

Not only does indecision make for ineffectiveness but it makes ugliness. Decisiveness is winesome. It has charm. Even the tender Christ was disgusted by the half-hearted: "I know thy works," He said to a little group of professing Christians, "that thou are luke warm, and neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou are luke warm, and neither cold or hot, I will vomit thee out of my mouth." It is an ugly word but there are few characteristics that are uglier in the sight of God or man than flabby half-heartedness.

III.

Not only does indecision make for wretchedness and for weakness, it makes for utter tragedy. To miss the best in life, it is not necessary to make positively wrong decisions. All that is necessary is to fail to make a positive right decision. Almost any act is better than inaction. It is said that a donkey was once offered two delicious bundles of hay. They were of about equal size and equal fragrance. Therefore this donkey was so bewildered as to which he should eat first that he stood between the two and starved to death.

Here then is this ancient woman, she was offered a new chance. She had the privilege, after having made a bit of a mess of life, of starting again. She did not flatly refuse to take her opportunity but she took it in such a half-hearted fashion that she found no joy in it. Even while her face was to
the heights, her heart was still in Sodom. Walking thus half-hearted, she fell behind. Even leadened footed Lot outstripped her. Finding herself thus alone, she decided that in spite of the command that had been given her, she would look back. So she took that fatal look and the hot lava wrapped her in a shroud and left her a grotesque piece of statuary with her face turned not toward the heights but toward Sodom.

Now let us not miss the point of the story by concluding that God was thus punishing her for her failure to obey. She was not being punished for her sins but by them. Nor are we to conclude that her tragedy was the sudden death that overtook her. Her plight would have been just as horrible if she had lived another century. It might have even been more so. This is the case because her tragedy was not physical but spiritual. This death that came to her only gave us a permanent picture of her. The thing that ruined her was not the backward look of her eyes. That was only a symptom of an inner disease. It was the backward look of the soul.

Jesus spoke to the same purpose when he told the story of a certain rich farmer. When this farmer was telling himself how successful he was, God broke in upon his soliloquy by saying: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Why was he a fool? Not because he died suddenly. He would have been just as big fool if he had lived prosperously until this hour. He was a fool because he ignored God, put himself in the place of God. It was not the sudden death that made him a fool. He would have been just the same kind of fool whether living or dead.

Years ago, when the city of Pompeii was excavated after being buried for some sixteen centuries, they found two bodies that the lava and ashes had embalmed and kept through the long years. One of them was the body of a Roman soldier. He was standing at the gate of the city. He had his
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spear in his hand. His sword was at his side. His helmet was on his head. Thousands rushed past him fleeing for their lives. Doubtless he longed to flee. Perhaps he had an anxious wife and children that were waiting for him. But there he stood. It was not the eruption of Vesuvius that made him thus faithful to his task. Vesuvius only photographed him that future ages might see his loyalty.

The second body was that of a woman. Her feet were turned toward the city gate but her body was turned backward. She was reaching her hands toward an objective that lay on the ground. That objective was a bag of pearls. As this woman was fleeing for her life, as Mrs. Lott was, she may have dropped her pearls but it is more likely that she saw a bag of pearls that someone else had dropped. That someone valued pearls too but they valued life more. Therefore, they hurried on and made their escape. But this woman stopped and the lava and ashes embalmed her in that attitude of evil greed. Vesuvius did not make her greed. It only preserved her picture.

Therefore, it might be wise for us to take our stand beside the Master as he looks at this bit of ashes that was once a woman. "Remember Lot's wife," he urges. Remember that she failed and missed the best in life. Not because of her open rebellion but because of her indecision. Remember her wretchedness, for indecision is a kill joy. Remember her ineffectiveness. Indecision makes us slow-footed. It changes our winesomeness into ugliness. Remember that indecision spells doom. "No man," says our Lord, "that puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom." We miss the best not because He does not want to give us the best but because we are unfit or incapacitated to receive it. Here then is a face to remember.

* * * * * * *
"What is the matter with you, Hagar?" (Moffett)
Genesis 21:17

This is a desert scene. There is a fascination about the desert when viewed in ease and security. I confess that I can watch it with interest by the hour from the window of an air conditioned car. But this same desert becomes quite a different something when one is lost in its wilds and looks upon it with blockshot eyes. It is thus that Hagar sees it. As far as eyes can see the weird waste stretches. The hot winds blow the drifting winds into ridges that look like the skeleton of some gigantic monster. Over all the heat spectres dance. Nothing living is in sight except a few scraggy bushes whose wretched appearance would seem to make death desirable.

When she turns her eyes to the heavens above, the scene is equally depressing. There is no shred of cloud to offer even for a moment a friendly shade. From out that hot and copper sky, a bloody sun is wounding with arrows of fire everything that is not already dead. Then she sees a little black speck very far away. Then there is another and another. They grow larger. There at least is life but it is a kind of life that is more ghastly than death. These are vultures that by some kind of magic have discovered that a feast is soon to be spread for them in this hot oven. As Hagar gazes on this forbidding scene, there is a deep silence. Then suddenly the silence is broken. She hears a moan and a feeble cry for water but she dares not look in the direction from which this cry comes. She knows what it means. Her boy, her only son,
is stretched under one of those scraggy bushes slowly dying of thirst. She is sitting at a distance from him with her back turned because she hasn't the courage to see him die. But at his cry the fountains of the great deep are broken up in her soul. She begins to sob with abandon. Those tears are bitter tears, bitter with grief and hate.

I.

Now it is to this wretched woman whose life has fallen in utter ruin about her that God speaks. How He spoke, we do not know. That does not matter. God has many ways of speaking. He asked this enraged and heartbroken woman a question. Did you ever notice how often God comes to us with a question on His lips. Again and again, He asks questions but these questions are never for His information or for His help. They are always for ours.

In the Garden of Eden story, He calls to Adam, "Where art thou?" This He does not because He has lost Adam but because Adam has lost Him. "Where is thy brother?" He questions bloody handed Cain. Of course, God knows where he is but He wants Cain to face the facts about himself. "What dost thou here, Elijah?" He questions one of His greatest prophets when that prophet had lost heart and was in danger of playing the coward instead of the hero. Thus He comes to Hagar with the question, "What is the matter with you?" Why this question? God was trying to tell Hagar something about herself.

'That is the matter with you, Hagar?" By this God is saying, "I know all about you, I know the ache that is in your heart and the wound from which you bleed. I know all the wrongs from which you suffer. Not long ago you set out bravely to begin a new life but you missed your way. You got lost in this trackless desert. Now you don't know where you are. Though you have lost yourself, I have not lost you." That was heartening to this broken woman as it is heartening for you and me. Whatever may be your circumstances, God knows you just as you are.
You may have lost much that you treasured but He Himself has not lost you.

2. This question was God's way of telling Hagar that He not only knew her whole tragic story but that He was interested. Hagar felt that not a soul cared whether she and her boy lived or died. God is telling her through this question, "I care. You may mean little to others. You may have suffered until you mean little to yourself but you have infinite meaning for me. I know what is wrong and I am sorrowing in your sorrow.

3. A third blessed fact that God was trying to get across to Hagar was that He not only knew and cared but He was able and willing to do something about it. All He needed in order accomplish His purpose was that Hagar cooperate with Him. That is all God ever needs. He wants her to "see" by telling Him all her tragic story. It often helps to confers even to one another but there is one place where we can lay bare our very hearts. That is in the presence of God.

"Here", as Shakespeare puts it, "we can unpack our hearts in words." We can do as another did whom Jesus questioned, we can tell Him all the truth. Here then was a friendly voice calling on a desperate woman to tell her story.

II.

What did Hagar say?

Frankly, we are not told. Just why her answer is not given I do not know. I have an idea that had it been printed it would have needed asbestos instead of paper. She had been greatly wronged and had greatly suffered and I am sure her story did not lose much in telling.

Some years before this woman, then perhaps a little girl, had become a slave in the household of Abraham. She had not been long in her new post when she found herself in a strange land and among what seemed to her queer people. Her master and mistress did not worship the gods of Egypt. They worshipped one God. One they claimed had made the whole world. In fact she learned that
it was at His call that they had left their distant city to become Nomads of the desert. She had not been long in this strange household until she learned that her master and mistress were upheld by one great hope. They were possessed of one passion. God had promised them a son. Through this son the whole world was to have, in a sense, a new start. Through him all the kingdoms of the earth were to be blessed. They were different, therefore, from the aimless Nomads about them. They were undergirded by a great purpose. They looked constantly toward a great destiny. But the days wore into weeks, the weeks into months and the months into years and no son was born. Abraham and Sarah had long since passed out of spring into summer and out of summer into autumn. Their waiting was a terrible strain upon their faith. For both of them the candle of expectancy burned low. At least to Sarah the flickering went out. "I shall never become a mother," she told herself. "Unless we take matters into our own hands, my husband and I will die in the wilderness and it will be as if we had never lived.

To perfect this tragedy, she made a suggestion that must have been very hard for her. "I have a maid," she told her husband, "she is my slave. Any child born of her will be my child. Since God is not going to give me a child of my very own, maybe He will give me one through her." So according to the easy morals of that day, Abraham married Hagar and in due course a son was born. This changed Hagar's whole outlook. From a slave, she came to count and to count big. This ancient Cinderella felt that the great destiny that was meant for Sarah's son would now be the lot of her own.

But this was too good to be true. At last the Angel of Suffering came to Sarah and Isaac was born. "From that hour," said this desperate woman, "I knew my hopes were doomed to disappointment. Months later when we were having a feast Sarah saw my boy playing with hers. Aristocrat that she was, she flew into a rage. Her son was too good to play with the son of a slave. Then and there, she demanded that I be cast out. My master tried to reason but it ended by his setting me
adrift in a friendless world with nothing to provide for my son except a bit of bread and a bottle of water."

Some years ago, a very earnest and orthodox woman in my church, a teacher of the Women's Bible Class gave a party for the members of her class and their husbands. She asked an actress with real ability to read. This actress agreed to read a Bible story that she read was an imaginary scene at the home of Abraham and Sarah. She read well and it was terrific. I confess that if I had met Abraham on the street as I went home I would have ducked down the alley rather than speak to him. It is a sordid and cruel story. A story of a woman greatly wronged.

III.

What did God have to say to this embittered woman for whom everything had gone wrong?

1. His first word is a call to courage, "Fear not." That word is written in the Bible over and over again. We are fearful creatures capable of being wounded in so many ways. We need a lot of help in keeping up our courage. But God did more than merely call her to courage. He gave a reason. That is the only kind of encouragement that is of any value. "Fear not?" In heaven's name, why not? Because God answered, "I have heard the voice of the lad where he is." Of course, he had heard Hagar too. But this amazing book puts the emphasis on God's care of children. It is the only ancient book that does that. God is the Father of all but He is especially near those in childhood. To receive one such is to receive Him. Because one such is a crime so desperate that it would be better to have a mill stone hanged about our necks and be drowned in the sea than to do such wrong.

2. Having called this mother to courage, He merely calls the weak according to her courage. "Take up the child," He commands. Hagar had thrown him down and turned her back on him. This she had done not because she was too
busy as some mothers are today. She did not turn away because her husband needed her that day, nor even because she was slightly intoxicated. She turned away because she had lost hope and couldn't bear to see her son die. "Don't give him up," God commands. Never give up, however far he has gone. However, spiritually dead he seems, take up the child he is yours. He is your responsibility. In the same way He calls to us. Pick up your broken vows. Take up those convictions to which you have proved untrue. Take up those duties on which you have turned your back. Take up your enthusiasms of which you have become ashamed, and begin again.

3. As Hagar thus obeyed, she found her needs met. The Lord opened her eyes with the story and she saw a well of water. We are not to understand by this that God miraculously dug a well for Hagar in the desert. The well had been there all the time but she had so centered her gaze upon her own bitterness and her own sorrow that she had failed to see. She was like those two friends who walked on the way to the village on Easter morning in company with Jesus but their eyes were so fixed upon the tomb that they failed to recognize the Risen Christ.

When this woman saw the well she filled her empty water bottle and put it to the parched lips of her son and to her own parched lips. What this ancient writer means, of course, is that the real well — that water that springs up into everlasting life is always here. Always our Lord is inviting, as in the long ago, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." "He that believeth on me," as the scripture has said, "out of his inner life shall flow a spring of living water." However harshly life has treated you, the fountain that satisfies is infinitely near. Drink and you will find satisfaction for yourself. Not only so but you will find something to share with your needy friends.
THE QUESTION OF THE SENSUALIST.

"What Profit Shall This Birthright do to me?"

Genesis 25:32.

This question comes out of the long past of yesterday. It comes to us dimmed by the dust of the centuries. What possible interest can such a story have for you and me? Of course, there was once a day and a place where it was at home. But, how queer, and out of place, it seems in this busy, rushing, bustling, world, of which we are a part. Assuming that it had something to say to the people of that primitive day, it must be as silent as a mummy, so far as having a message for us.

But, strange as it may seem, this is not the case at all. The stories of the Bible were timely stories. They were spoken to different needs of a different day. Because they were so timely, they are also timeless. In fact, many of them are far more at home in our present world, than they were in the world to which they were first spoken. This story of Esau is an outstanding example of this truth. Its lessons were pertinent and pressing centuries ago. They are still more pertinent and pressing at this very hour.

Now, it so happens, that Esau made a failure of the big business of living. That does not mean that he went grossly, and horribly wrong. He committed no crime. Yet, when we look in the Rogue's Gallery in the Old Testament, we find the picture of Esau hanging there. Then, when we turn to the Rogue's Gallery, of the New Testament, we, again, find the face of Esau. Not that he was an all bad man. Nobody is. There was much phase in his make-up, but also some very fine material. He was a mixture, even as you and I.

Let us look then, at some of these fine qualities. Had we known him, in the days of his young manhood, I am quite sure we should have liked him. We
should have preferred him to his twin brother, Jacob, without the slightest hesitation. Jacob, till he was transformed by the grace of God, was rather a detestable chap. He had the winning way of being hated. But, not so Esau. He was quite likeable and, were he living today, he would be one of the most popular men on any college campus. Why so?

1. He was a fine animal. He was a man for the great out-of-doors. He was trained to wide open spaces. He was alive, and sinewy, and hard as a nail. He was the first in the chase. He was a skilled hunter. I am sure that he was the leader of whatever athletic games they played in that distant day.

2. Along with this fine body, there was equally a fine physical courage. He hunted animals of the wild, in a day when he was little better armed than the animals themselves. He was doubtless highly gifted with physical courage. He would not, I am sure, have stood up bravely for a moral cause. But this would have been caused, I dare say, not so much because he was a coward, as because he would have seen no use in taking such a stand. He would have thought that the difference between right and wrong about the matter, was such a trifle, that there could possibly be no use in getting excited over it.

3. A third virtue of this vigorous, brawny man, was kindness. Of course kindness is beautiful everywhere. But it is especially beautiful in the physically strong. Kindness does not sound so impressive, yet nothing would do more to heal the world's wounds, and make the friction-threaded machine of life run smoothly, as plain, every day kindness. Esau was uniformly kind.

Not only was he kind, but the place where he exercised kindness, was the place where it is always needed, and sometimes is very difficult. He exercised it at home. I am thinking of a certain young lady, who was the center of her social set. Her friends were many. To see her among her own crowd, she seemed the embodiment of kindness. But, I discovered, to my surprise, that she was
more kind to strangers, than she was to members of her own family. When her mother was afflicted with a lingering and painful disease, she was sometimes cross with her. By and by, when it became my painful duty to bury that mother, I had a feeling, that much of the bitter grief of that daughter, was due, not so much to the sense of loss, as the memory of her own unkindness.

Not only was Esau kind at home, but, he was kind to the most unattractive and most neglected member of his family. He was kind to his old half-blind Dad. Isaac had married Rebecca. He married a woman who was his superior intellectually, and far his superior in driving force. She henpecked him out of all self-respect. Therefore, long before he died, he had degenerated into a poor, old, dotard, with little left, of all his usefull possessions, except his appetite. He could still eat. But, when he was eager for a specially savory dish, he did not look to his wife,—he had to look to this great, big, husky, son of his, Esau. Whatever fault we may find with Esau, I hold, to his credit, that he was kind to his old father, for whom everybody else seemed to have lost respect.

Finally, Esau was uniformly generous. When Jacob came back home, after an absence of twenty years, he was terribly afraid to meet Esau. Therefore, he sought to please him by sending him presents. He fairly loaded him down with sheep, goats, and camels. But, when they came face to face, Esau turned them all back to him, saying, "I have enough."

"I have enough". That is not a common word on the lips of either Jew or Anglo-Saxon. What is enough? About the truest answer, that I know to this question, if a bit cynical, is, "enough" is a little more than I have. If I have ten thousand dollars I need a little more. If one hundred thousand, that is not enough. If a million, that is still not enough. Perhaps Esau would have liked to have had more sheep and cattle, but, he did not desire them at his brother's expense.
Not only was he generous in not accepting his brother's wealth, but he was generous in his forgiveness. Jacob had done him a great wrong. He had had twenty years to nurse the hot fires of his hate. But, instead of their growing, hotter, they died down to gray ashes. That speaks well for Esau. Jesus must have read this story with approval. When he told the story of the Prodigal Son, he said 'his father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him'. This is exactly the language used with Esau. Esau treated this brother of his, who had so greatly wronged him, as the father treated the returned Prodigal. So, here is a fine physical man. A man of courage. A man of kindness. A man of generosity. Yet, he made a mess of his life.

II

What then, were his defects? Why is he condemned?

1. The first charge brought against him, is that he was a sensualist. This word is applied to him by the writer of The Letter to the Hebrews. He described him in this fashion, because no other word would have described him so correctly. We use the word "sensualist" today, with various meanings. We apply it to one who is an addict to sexual vice. But, this ancient writer gave this broad meaning to the word. A sensualist, is a man who revels in the realm of the senses. He is a man who has no appreciation of the unseen. We would call him secular rather than sensual. Now, the fact that Esau was a sensualist does not mean that he was a foe of the church,—he simply ignored it. He was not antagonistic to life's finer spiritual values,—he simply was not interested in them. He did not grow angry and argue against God,— he merely forgot Him. He was interested in his dinner; in his hunting; in his dog; in his women; in the things that he saw and handled every day. For him, those finer values, that we call spiritual, simply did not exist.

This fact comes out in the scene of which our text is a part. One day,
about sunset, I can imagine, Esau came home from the chase. He has had a hard and exciting day. He has not even taken time to eat. But, now, as he passes Jacob's tent, he catches the aroma of the pot of stew that Jacob is cooking. His vigorous appetite calls for immediate satisfaction. 'Feed me', he urges, 'with that red stuff. Let me gulp down that stew.' Then Jacob, who has been waiting for just such a moment as this, conceals his eagerness, while he makes a suggestion. 'All right! but would you mind selling me your birthright?'

Now, this birthright belonged to Esau as the elder son. It meant the privilege of being the religious leader of his clan. But, Esau cares little for these values. 'Take it', he says, 'what good shall this birthright do for me?'.

Religion

He cares nothing for the values represented by Christianity.

Then, his indifference to spiritual values was shown, not only by his selling his birthright, but, by the marriage he made. When he decided to marry, to the consternation of his parents, he picked a Pagan every time. Why? Not, I repeat, because he was hostile to his faith, but because he was indifferent to it. The relationship between husband and wife is the most binding of all human relationships, but, there is one that takes precedence over it, and that is, our relationship to God.

For this reason, any girl, who is deeply religious, makes a great mistake when she marries a man who has no use for religion at all. For this reason, a young man and woman of different faiths, run a great risk, if their faith means anything to them. For instance, if a Catholic and Protestant marry, their chances for success are close to naked nothing, unless one can wholeheartedly accept the faith of the other. To be indifferent to the religious belief of the one you marry, indicates that you are a bit of a sensualist, with too little appreciation of the values that last.
2. The second charge brought against Esau is that he was a profane man. The word profane, like the work sensualist, has come to have a restricted meaning. We think of a profane man as one who swears. But, swearing is the outcome of profanity. It is the symptom, while profanity is the disease. That is, swearing does not make a man profane. A man swears because he is profane.

Who then is a profane man?

The word profane comes from two Latin words, pro, -in front of, and fane, -the temple. Within the temple there was a holy place, but in front of the temple there was a common, - a place with no fence around it. A profane man, is a man who has allowed his fences to fall in ruins. This Esau has done. There was no holy place in his life. There was nothing even that he felt should be fenced in. There was nothing ugly that he felt should be fenced out. His life was a common, across which any club-footed devil could roam at will.

Now, this is a danger that threatens in every age. It is peculiarly threatening today. Esau's profanity was an outcome of sensuality. Having no appreciation of life's finer values, there was no good reason for his keeping up his fences. Millions have that same attitude today. Boys and girls who receive no religious training except what they receive in public schools, become secularized. Even a diploma is little more than a kind of check that they are to change into dollars at the earliest possible date possible. If we are to keep up our fences, we must believe that there are some things that must be fenced in, and some that must be kept out.

When, as a lad of some sixteen, Daniel found himself a war casualty, in the strange city of Babylon, he was at first largely without hope. Then, he was given a chance. Because of his ability he was selected for training in the royal school and for a position in the service of the State. But, when he was
led to the palace to begin his course of training, he was confronted by food that it was unlawful for him to eat and with wine that he could not consistently drink. But, instead of doing what everybody did, he kept up his fences. He refused to strike his flag to the god of the scene. "Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself." The man who does that, must have some appreciation of spiritual values.

Here is another young man of genius, in equally as hard, if not harder, situation. He is a slave in a foreign and desolate city. The wife of his master literally threw herself at him. But, even in that day, there were those who believed, that moral cleanliness was worth fighting for. They were wise enough to know that to sacrifice upon every wayside altar, is to have little to give when one comes to the supreme sacrificial moment of life. Therefore, he said, "Can I do this great evil and sin against God?" There are thousands today, who are spoiling their chance for successful living, by allowing their fences to fall.

3. Finally Esau sold out. This is an ugly word. It belongs to every generation. Why did he sell out? Not because the price was so high, but because he looked upon the article he had to sell as so cheap. "He despised his birthright", as our Scripture puts it. To despise, in our language, is to hate. To despise, in the words of the Bible, is to under-value. Here were those values represented by religion and clean living, and he threw them away for a dish of beans.

Of course, we are not to think that Esau despised his birthright for the first time, the moment before he sold it. Jacob knew he had been under-valuing it all along. Otherwise, he would not have undertaken to have bought him out. We climb upon the heights with a steady climb, and we descend to the depths in the same fashion. No man leaps into hell with a single bound. Esau's final act, of selling his birthright, in the scene before us, was but the sub-total of the petty sell-outs of his yesterdays.
III

Had I met Esau, after this transaction, and have said, "I understand you sold your birthright." "Sure" he would have said flippantly, "I sold it. What about it. What difference is it going to make?"

Well, at first, it did not seem to make any difference. Esau went home from that dinner, to sleep, perhaps, as soundly as he had every slept. When he awakened the next morning, he felt as fit as he ever did. The sky was just as blue. The chase was just as thrilling. His aim was just as true. 'I haven't lost a thing' he might have said to himself. 'Let Jacob have his birthright, if he wants it. It is of no value to me.

But, no man can live by bread alone. Not even a sensualist like Esau.

There came a time when this man realized something of his tragic failure.

There came a time when he was sorry. "Afterward", says the story. "Afterward" — that is an impressive word. To every act, there is always an afterward. When we make a choice, we choose, not only a dish of beans, but we have to choose the consequences. When we make a turn in our road, we do not simply choose the road, we also choose the goal to which it leads.

There came a time, therefore, when Esau looked back, with regret, upon his sordid transaction. But, the story tells us, "he found no place for repentance, though he sought diligently, and with tears." We are not going to understand by this, of course, that God refused to forgive Esau. Always, God stands ready to forgive every one of sin, if we are only willing to accept his forgiveness. What it means, is this: Esau found no way of undoing the past. He found no way to enjoy, and use his birthright, as he might have enjoyed it, and might have used it, if he had taken it seriously in life's bright morning, long ago.

We need to remind ourselves constantly that, while repentance can do much; while it can bring pardon; there are some things that even repentance cannot do. It cannot undo the past. I was called, sometime ago, to see a young woman who was
dying, with poison self administered. She was in great agony of body, but greater agony of mind. She told me a bit of her story,—how sorry she was that she had taken this way out. Then, she said, "Will God forgive me?" And I could tell her, with absolute confidence, that He would. And, I think she went out to meet Him in peace. But, there was one thing that repentance could not do. It could not save her from the poison that was destroying her body.

Finally, the tragedy of Esau's life is that, he missed giving so much, to end by giving almost nothing at all. There seems a touch of grim sarcasm in the author's description of Esau's costly dinner,—"he sat down and ate and drank, and rose up and went his way." That, it would seem, was all life meant to this Sensualist. When Paul began to preach, Christianity was little more than a Jewish sect. Paul started it over the civilized world. But when Esau came on the scene, there was a dish full of beans, and he went swaggering off the stage, wiping his greasy mouth on the sleeve of his goat skin coat,—it was so tempting. And, just that pitiful kind of tempting dishes was all that life meant to this Sensualist. What a tragedy for one made in the image of God!

But with them you can't beat it best

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THE SCHEMING FACE

"Thy curse be upon me, my son."
Genesis 27:13

One of the beautiful miracles that is possible in our world is that the ugliest of ugly ducklings can become a swan. Then that has a very sober side to it. The most beautiful of swans can degenerate into an ugly duckling. It is possible to be born anew, born from above. It is also possible to be born from beneath. The cocoon of an Emperor moth is possessed of little beauty, but out of it is born a creature as colorful as the rainbow. When the ant is young, he has wings and is able to fly. But soon he says - business is business, and then he throw away his wings and begins to crawl. This woman, Rebekah by name, began by flying but she ended in a crawl. The eventide of her life was black. It was all the blacker because she had such a bright morning.

I.

As the story opens we see two white haired men in deep conversation. One of these is Abraham, a great soul in any age. The other is his steward, his business manager, also his friend. The matter under discussion is a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son and heir. Isaac is now nearing forty. He doubtless would have married years before but for the fact that his mother occupied so large a place in his life; and for the further fact that all the girls of marriageable age about him were pagen.

Even in that far off day, Abraham was wise enough to know that marriages between foreigners, or even between those of different faiths, seldom turn out well. After the first World War, quite a few of our boys brought home French
wives. I am not arguing that these wives were not quite as good as their husbands but they had had different upbringing, different traditions. Therefore, the marriage usually ended in tragedy. Marriages between Catholics and Protestants are seldom successful except when one can wholeheartedly adopt the faith of the other. So Abraham is instructing his steward to go five hundred miles away to his own kinspeople to select a wife for his son. Under no circumstances is Isaac to marry one of the Canaanites. Nor is he under any circumstances to be permitted to return to the land from whence Abraham had set out.

In the next scene this steward in the discharge of his mission has reached the city of Haran. Here he is to find a wife for his young master. Having reached his destination, the steward asked for divine leadership. He prays that God will direct him to the girl of his choice. He asks for a sign. Not one that is silly and insignificant but full of meaning. He did not pray to distinguish the girl by the kind of rouge she wore or by her hairdo, or even by her finger nails.

"Lead me," he prays, "to a girl who is generous and kind and considerate of others. Therefore when I ask for a drink of water that the one who responds generously be thy choice."

Hardly had he finished his prayer when he saw the girls coming out of the village, each with her water pitcher on her shoulder, to draw water. He recognizes the girl at once. She is vivacious, aggressive and beautiful. As she comes up from the well he hurries forward and asks for a drink. Gracefully and eagerly, she lowers the pitcher to the old man's lips. Then she volunteered, "I will give thy camels to drink also." There were ten of these and you know a camel is a heavy drinker.

At this the heart of the old servant sings. He feels that he has found the right girl. At once, he puts lovely bracelets on her wrists and earrings in her ears. He then tells her how he has come from her kinsman Abraham and something of his mission. Naturally Rebekah hurries away home to tell this astonishing news.

There is a little touch of humor when her brother Laban, who became in later years a notorious skinflint, saw the jewelry he became all enthusiasm and hurried out to
welcome the servant with, "Blessed be thou of the Lord." A man representing that much wealth deserved careful consideration.

But the steward told his story, asking for the hand of Rebekah for Isaac. The mother and brother gave their consent but when the old servant wanted to leave the very next day they objected. Then they decided to leave it to her who was most concerned. So they called Rebekah and put to her this question: "Wilt thou go with this man?" And being a woman of decision, she answers, "I will go."

What an old story that is and how new. Here was this young girl volunteering to turn her back on all that she had known and loved in life's spring to start anew in a far away and strange world. But she said as countless thousands of her sisters have said since then, "I will go." Sometimes she hasn't gone too much. Sometimes she has gone from wealth to poverty, from prominence to obscurity, from joy to sorrow but other times she has gone from laughter to sweeter laughter; from a carefree life to one full of responsibility but full of blessing as well.

Then the goodbyes are said the the long journey of five hundred miles or more begins. During this long journey Rebekah doubtless had a lot of time to think. Sometimes she was very glad. Sometimes she was sad. Sometimes she wondered why she had ever made such a daring decision. We wonder why ourselves. Her motives were doubtless mixed as ours often are. I think the fact that her future husband was rich had some weight. The romance of the adventure appealed to her. Then, I am ready to believe that her's was in part the venture of faith. She "knew something of the rich promises that God had made to Abraham and his heirs. I like to believe that she was great enough in heart to part a part in there.

Then one day toward sunset she saw in the distance a man walking alone in the fields. The quicker beating of her own heart and the fact that she knew she was nearing her future home made her suspect who the man might be. Coming a little nearer, she put on her veil, a custom that brides have followed through all the centuries. Then the two met for the first time and were immediately married.
They did not know each other any better than the average girl who marries a soldier today. But we are led to believe that it was love at first sight which is not a very safe sort of love. But marriages made by parents have often worked out as well as those made by the bride and groom themselves. These two made a lovely beginning. The English prayer book speaks of their marriage as if it were ideal. In the beginning, it was. In its course and consummation, it certainly was not.

II.

It was not long after the twining of this bright morning before the clouds began to gather. Soon they gathered and this marriage rotted down and fell apart. Not that these two ever divorced each other but they lived divorced in heart for a good many years. Whose fault was it? We can give you the usual answer. It was the fault of them both. They were by nature very opposite but opposites can often get along beautifully. Jack Spratt and his wife are shining examples, but here it did not work out well.

I think I can see how the chasm between them, very narrow at first, began to widen. Rebekah was energetic and aggressive. She was ambitious. She was all for getting on. She was a born manager. Isaac on the other hand, while a good man, was rather passive and inactive. He did not care to manage anything. He was further handicapped by a mother complex. We read the revealing word that after his marriage he was comforted for the death of his mother. That is, Rebekah had not only to be Isaac's wife but his mother as well.

It is easy to guess what happened as a result of this arrangement. Rebekah more and more took over, partly because she had to and partly because she wanted to. As she became more and more aggressive, she became more and more strong and decisive. As Isaac was more and more relieved of all responsibility, he became weaker and less decisive. Bye and bye, his lovely wife had him hemmed in and out of all self respect. But even before Isaac ceased to respect himself, she had lost all respect for him.
This was the case because there is this fundamental difference between men and women. Every man who makes a happy husband has to feel that his wife relies on him and looks up to him for some reason. However trifling and secondary that reason may be, every woman to be a happy wife must for some reason look up to her husband. Some have had to go down in the cellar and look out in order to do this but they have contrived it and have helped the happiness of both by contriving it. The average wife will henpeck her husband if she can, but having succeeded, she doesn't like the job.

Things were already getting in a bad way when an event took place that should have brought this dividing pair closer together. After almost a score of years of waiting, the angel of suffering came to Rebekah and Esau and Jacob were born. Now both of these two shared with God in the creation of these lovely babies. But instead of being drawn closer together by them, they were pushed further apart. Each foolish parent chose one of the boys for a favorite and seemed bent on acting as if the other were no kin at all. I was in a home sometimes ago where there was a boy and a girl. The boy belonged to the father and the girl to the mother. These parents were foolish enough to talk such rot before the children.

Easy going Isaac chose Esau for a favorite. The story says that Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison. That is a revealing touch. It would indicate that Rebekah wasn't very much concerned about what her husband ate any more. It would also indicate that poor old Isaac is becoming increasingly a glutton. Isaac and Esau had this in common, they both liked to eat. The writer to the Hebrews calls Esau a sensualist. That word does not mean uncleanness as it does now. It simply means that he lived in the realm of his senses. He did not hate religion, he simply wasn't interested in it. He was interested in the chase, in his dog and his bow and arrow and in his dinner.

No; for these two who seemed to be totally without any worthy ambition were in the eyes of Rebekah thoroughly contemptable. She had no more respect for Esau than she had for her flabby husband. But all the love she would have given both
of them she lavished upon shrewd, ambitious, aggressive Jacob. Jacob was certainly made in the image of his mother. Both were eager to get on. Both believed in the promises of God. Both believed however that God needed to be managed. Both believed that the best way to manage was by trickery and deceit. Both believed that a crooked line is the shortest distance between two points.

Rebekah being a schemer was not above eavesdropping. She listened at tent flaps to find out what was going on. One day she was rewarded. She overheard Isaac tell Esau to go into the forest and kill a deer, fix him a good meal and then he would bless him. He could not think of giving a blessing on an empty stomach. While Esau was gone Rebekah called Jacob and told him that if he had any sense at all he would beat Esau to the draw. He would feed Isaac first and secure the blessing.

Such flagrant rascality threatened to stomp even foxy Jacob. This was the case, not because he hesitated at the unfairness of it but at the danger of it. He was afraid that he might get caught. In that case, he said, my father would give me a curse instead of a blessing. It was then that his mother urged and won her way, "Try curse be upon me, my son." Of course, she didn't expect to receive any curse. She believed she could gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. But the curse came, nevertheless.

III.

What was the outcome?

Jacob got the blessing that was intended for Esau just as in former days he had won Esau's birthright, which meant the leadership of the clan. Now Esau was patient and easy going like his father but he had had enough of Jacob's dishonesty so he vowed to kill him as soon as his old father had died. The one little flower that grew in Esau's heart was the love for his father.

When Rebekah heard that her favorite was in danger she hurried him away to her brother, Laban. He was to be gone, in her language, for a few days.
But those few days lengthened into weeks and months and into a score of years. She never saw her favorite again. Not only so but the chasm between herself and her husband, between herself and her other son grew wider and wider. They seemed to live together in an atmosphere poisoned by hate and suspicion. She was indeed cursed in losing all that she loved. Not only so but she passed on to her son her belief in trickery. When at the end of twenty years he sought to get back home, that strange wrestler met him by the brook. There was a night of struggle until at last scheming, tricky Jacob said: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And the wrestler said "What is thy name?" and Jacob answered, "I am a trickster", and God transformed him from a spiritual pauper into a prince. But this gracious miracle of transformation did not come to pass because of his mother's influence, but in spite of it.

Here then was a marriage, in a profound sense, made in Heaven but even Heaven made marriages have to be worked out by the husband and the wife. If your marriage fails fundamentally, there are just two people to blame. There were two people in this instance. The chief blame rested upon the stronger, Rebekah. She failed not because she was a bad woman but because trusting in her own shrewd schemes and plans she let God slip out of her life, out of her marriage and out of her home and the woman that might have been an unspeakable blessing became little better than a curse.

* * * * * * *
THE SCHEMING FACE

"Thou, curse be upon me, my son."
Genesis 27:13

These are the words of a wife and mother. She is planning to do a base and dishonest deed. Even her son, who like herself is a born schemer, even Jacob, who believes along with his mother that a crooked line is the shortest distance between two points, is startled. He is afraid of his mother's dishonest and shoddy proposal. "What you suggest may bring a curse rather than a blessing." Of course, Rebecca does not believe that it will bring a curse but she says "If it does, fall let the curse upon me."

It is a striking fact that there is nothing too good to say about this human nature of ours. However poor our beginnings, we have capacities to ascend that are a little less than infinite. The ugliest of us if we only face in the right direction and continue to climb will surely achieve Christlikeness. The beauty of the Lord will suddenly one day rest upon us as the sunshine rests upon the hills.

But if we have immeasurable capacity to ascend, we also have an equal capacity to descend. If there is nothing too good to say about us, it is equally true that there is nothing too bad. It is thrilling to know that the ugliest of ugly ducklings may become a swan. It is startling to realize that the most beautiful of swans may degenerate into an ugly duckling. One man who saw Jesus in the days of his flesh became the apostle of love. The other became a traitor in the same school. This fact is most strikingly illustrated in the case of the gifted and scheming woman Rebecca. The ugliness of the eventide of her life is accented by the beauty of its morning.

I

Look at this bright morning.

As the curtain rises we see two men in earnest conversation. One of
these, a Elesia (?) by name, is a faithful and trusted employee and friend of Abraham. He is a man who through long association with one who was a friend of God, has come to share the faith of his employer. He is a man of courage, devotion and loyalty.

The other man, Abraham, is one of the great characters of the Old Testament. In fact, he is one of the great characters of the Bible. Even when the writers of the New Testament wanted to tell us what religion is at its best, they have a strange way of harking back to this man Abraham, who one day left a great and growing city at the call of God to journey into the unknown. He took this rash and wild step because he had a firm faith that God was going to give the world a new start through him and through his children.

Now, for a long time nothing seemed to come of his mad faith. How could all the nations of the earth be blessed through him when he had no child? Yet in spite of the fact that all his high dreams seem to come down to a dusty nothing, he never turned back, he never gave up. There he stood with his little handful of years rapidly trickling through his fingers, saying, "I know that God did speak to me and I know that what God says at the long last must come to pass."

Then there came that great event for which he had waited so long—the birth of his son Isaac. When Isaac had grown to manhood there arose the problem of choosing for his son a wife. Now Abraham believed firmly in the promises of God but he believed that it was his duty to cooperate with God. Therefore, he determined that in choosing a wife for his boy he would not choose a pagan. If a man marries a pagan he has an exceedingly good chance of becoming a pagan himself. Isaac must marry a woman of his own faith.

With this purpose in mind he pledges his faithful and loyal friend and
servant to go far across the country to Mesopotamia to the little village of Nahor, to choose a wife of his own kinspeople. Elesia gave his great promise. This pledge he was making as the curtain rises upon the scene.

The next scene is very far from the tent of Abraham. Elesia has made the long journey. He reaches the village for which he is seeking about sundown. The girls in the village are just coming to the well to draw water. Great in the faith of Abraham, this steward prays a simple prayer. He asked guidance in the selection of the future wife of his young chieftain. "God grant," he prays, "that the girl that I am to choose may be a young woman of character, frank and generous and courageous."

This was a simple test that he made. "When I ask her to get me a drink of water, if she is the right one, let her tell me so by replying, "Drink and I will draw water for thy camels also." When Elesia thus spoke to the most beautiful and vivacious and charming girl of the company, she at once took her water bucket from off her shoulders and said, "Drink and I will draw water for thy camels also."

Upon receiving this answer the servant presented the young woman with gold earrings and bracelets that must have been of great value. Naturally, in her thrill and excitement, she hurried home to show them to the family. With a touch of humor, the author tells us that it was after Laban had seen these tokens of esteem that he hurried out to say to Abraham's messenger; "Welcome, thou blessed of the Lord." Laban, like many of his people and ours, had an eye for good business.

When this messenger found himself in the bosom of Rebecca's family, he told the purpose of his errand and invited this vigorous young woman to become the wife of his chief. In making his appeal he did not fail to tell them how very prosperous that his master and friend Abraham had become. When he had made his plea and asked Rebecca if she was willing
to go, her family decided to leave the decision up to her. "Wilt thou
go with me?" he asked. And being a young woman of decision and character
she answered, "I will go."

Just why she reached this decision I do not know. I think the romance
of it appealed to her. She felt the lure of far distances. Then I have
an idea that the place of leadership that was offered made its appeal. I
like to believe, also, that she shared somewhat in the faith of her people.
She had heard that all the families of the earth were to be blessed through
Abraham. Naturally she wanted to have a part in bringing about
this blessing. but be the causes what they may, she at once decided to
become the wife of a man whom she had never seen.

In

The third scene she is making the long journey. Perhaps more than
once she had been sorry; perhaps she was half afraid; yet she never turned
at last one

back. Then afternoo/she lifted her eyes to see a young man
walking in meditative fashion in the distance. Her pulse beat quicker.
"This," she said, "is the man whom I have come to marry." She alighted
from her camel, made his acquaintance, and immediately they were married.
You can see that as many another young woman of today, she married a
stranger.

II

Now, this should have been the beginning of a beautiful romance, but
sad to say, her romance reached its high water mark with the marriage. God
pity the couple whose best memories are memories of the honeymoon. Of course
the fact that I have a fishing license does not mean that I will bring home
a magnificent catch every time I go fishing. No more is marriage license the
guarantee of a successful marriage. These two never divorced each other.
They remained together after a fashion until the end of the chapter. Yet
their marriage was a needless and tragic failure. They were miserable when
they might have been happy. This was the case because instead of growing
together, they grew apart. This was true from the very first. I try to convince the couples that come to me for marriage that they must grow; that they will love each other far better twenty years from now, or far less.

Whose fault was it that these two grew apart? One can wreck a marriage; it takes two to make it succeed. But the fact that marriages are so often wrecked is not always the fault of one single person. One may be more to the blame than another, but as a rule, both are to blame. Such was the case here.

This failure was in part due to Isaac. Isaac was a fine, religious, clean-living man, but his virtues were on the passive side. He was an easy-going man who did not care to take aggressive action. Then the record indicates that he had a mother complex. It tells this by a delicate hint that when he married Rebecca, he was comforted for the loss of his mother. That is, he insisted that his wife be both a wife and mother to him.

By taking this course he left the decisions and the managing of affairs increasingly up to Rebecca. Not only did he allow her to manage the affairs of their marriage, but increasingly she came to manage him as well. Almost every woman will manage her husband if she can but when she finishes the job neither she nor the husband like it. This course leads Isaac to an increasing sense of self-contempt. It also led Rebecca to an increasing contempt for him.

Now, if Isaac was lacking in aggressiveness, Rebecca was over strong with it. She was ambitious, self-assertive, courageous and very largely unscrupulous. When she saw that her husband could be managed, she managed him. In fact, she henpecked him out of all his self-respect.

Then something happened that should have saved the situation. After twenty years of waiting, Rebecca became an expectant mother. When her time came, she gave birth to twins, Esau the older, and Jacob the younger.
Now both Isaac and Rebecca had shared with God in the creating of these two sturdy boys. They both belonged to Isaac; they both belonged to Rebecca. But instead of accepting that fact, they widened the chasm that already existed between them by each choosing a favorite son. How silly and wicked that was. Yet I am thinking of fathers and mothers who with their boys and girls have done the same thing. The father claims the boys as his; the mother claims the girls as hers.

Isaac chose as his favorite Esau. His choice was natural. Isaac had degenerated into a selfish, fat old man, whose chief pastime was eating. Esau was most like him, at least in his mental outlook. While a vigorous young athlete he was a sensualist in that he chose _____ for those of the senses. For the morrow he took no more thought than the lilies.

Rebecca quite naturally made Jacob her favorite. It was just another way of loving herself, as Isaac's favorite was just another way of loving himself. Jacob, as his mother, was shrewd, scheming, slippery as an eel, incapable of being trusted, out after the main chance. Thus these two foolish parents grow apart, themselves dividing their family.

III

What was the end of all this? It was the tragedy that might have been expected.

1. Rebecca, in looking out for her favorite, was modern at least in that respect. One day she heard Isaac tell Esau to go kill a deer and prepare him a good dinner. After he had eaten the dinner he would give his favorite his blessing. Isaac could bless nobody on an empty stomach. Now this blessing was held as very important.

Having made this discovery, Rebecca set about the task of beating Esau to the draw. She had Jacob to kill a couple of kids. Then, having herself prepared a delicious stew, she sent Jacob in with it. He was so dis-
guised that blind old Isaac did not recognize him as Jacob feared he might do. When his mother suggested this fiendish scheme, he said, "I am afraid I will get caught." He was not afraid of the sin but only of being detected and receiving a curse rather than a blessing. But his determined mother said, "Thou curse be upon me, my son." So she carried out her scheme and it worked and her favorite got the blessing.

But how about the curse? She got that too. She had her own way but she paid a terrible price. She had been in a sense separated from her husband before, but now the chasm begame far wider. Before this she had not been very close to Esau, but now he hated her with passionate intensity. It even costed her the loss of her favorite. She sent him away for a few days until Esau should forget, but those few days reached twenty years and she never saw her son again.

Thus this brilliant and gifted woman who might have been an unmeasured blessing to her family, became only a curse. This she did not because she was entirely a bad woman. This she did not because she was without religion. But she could not trust God. She felt that even he had to be managed. She was fundamentally dishonest and caused endless heartache shere she might have caused vast joy.

Not only so, but her trickery and treachery was inherited by her son Jacob. He came increasingly to live by his wits. He believed in God but he believed in sharp dealing and underhand management yet more. We rejoice to realize one night God in his mercy brought Jacob to the end of himself and Jacob, the schemer, and trickster, became to Israel a prince. But this was not by virtue of the influence of his mother but in spite of it. God here carried out his purpose through the sons of Abraham, but this scheming woman missed her chance to help.
"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the
day. And when saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his
thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was stretched, as he wrestled with him. And he
said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except
thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob."


Last Sunday night, we studied Esau. We spoke of his fine qualities. He was
a splendid son, he was kind, he was generous, quick to get angry but quick to forgive.
There was much that was fine, but he was a sensuous man. He failed to
have any fence around his life. Therefore, upon a skyscraper foundation, he built
nothing better than a hen-house or a stable.

He is among the "Black Sheep" not so much because of any great wrong he did,
but because of the good that he refused to do. He was very popular. It has been
suggested that he was the original of that great song, "He is a Jolly Good Fellow."
But, he sold his birthright. It was bad enough for him to give up his privileges as
a civic and spiritual leader of his clan, but it was still worse for him to stand from
under the obligations of his clan. He was in the great succession; his grandfather
Abraham was a friend of God, he might have been, but he had no appreciation of the
spiritual. This might have been his tragic wail

I never cut my neighbor's throat, my neighbor's gold I never stole;
I never spoiled his house and land, but God have mercy on my soul.

For I am haunted night and day, for all the deeds I have not done;
Of unattempted loveliness, of costly valor never won.

Jacob, Esau's twin, is his opposite in many directions. He was not frank,
and honest, and open. He was shrewd, scheming, and tricky. From the standpoint of
geometry, he would have agreed with you that a straight line is the shortest distance
between two points. But in the matter of practical living, he would not have done so. Given a straight road and a crooked road to a certain goal, he would have chosen the crooked path every time. He was a born cheat. He delighted to live by his wits. Trickery seems to have been bred into his very bones. It is hard to love Jacob, but exceedingly easy to hate him.

But in spite of all these glaring faults - and he had them - there was some fine gold hidden away in his nature. It was deeply covered over by much coarse clay, it is true, but none the less there it was. Esau despised his birthright. He was simply not interested in the spiritual - Jacob was. Of course, his conception of God was vastly wrong, he thought that God needed to be managed. But he was concerned about it and desired to have Him on his side. It was his selfish appreciation of those values that Esau despised that lay back of some of his slimy deeds. It was also this appreciation that finally led to his remaking, for Jacob, you know, was transformed. From a spiritual pauper, he became a prince. His story, therefore, is one of the freshest and most heartening to be found in the Bible.

I.

There was every reason to believe that scheming and cunning Jacob would continue to be a cheat until the very end. This was true for the following reasons.

1. Jacob had been a trickster for a long time. The business of cheating was not altogether new to him. When he was forced to flee from his home, lest Esau should shoot one of his arrows into his heart, he was no longer a boy - he was a mature man. He had become firmly wedded to the idea that God is on the side of the sharpest wits and that whatever wins is right.

For instance, when he had reached his Uncle Laban's tent, there is at once
a battle of wits between him and his uncle. This uncle is a bit of a Shylock himself, he draws the first blood. He cheats Jacob out of his wife by giving him Leah instead of Rachel. You can hear Jacob's wail across the centuries, "Thou hast beguiled me," he said, as if the thought of treachery were horror to his innocent soul. Of course, treachery did look ugly to Jacob when it was used against him instead of his using it against another.

But while Laban drew the first blood, the final victory was with Jacob. He beat his uncle at his own game — slowly but surely he accumulated the best of Laban's cattle. At last, he disappeared across the plain one day driving huge herds before him. He has pitted his wits against one of the keenest men of the day, he has hoodwinked him, and outwitted him. He feels that God has blessed him and used his trickery to make him rich.

2. This brings us to the second reason why there seems little hope for Jacob's recovery. He has made a success of his sin. Now success in any enterprise is often twisty. Success is a heady wine, and most of us cannot bear it. Many folks who were simple and lovable when they had nothing, become rotten and unbearable when they get up in the world. Even money legitimately won often spells ruin. But if well-gotten gains are a test, ill-gotten gains are a far greater.

It is easy to understand why this is the case. When we make sin pay, we come to trust it more than we trust righteousness. Having won through wrong doing, we become morally color-blind. We come to suspect the law of sowing and reaping. Of course, whatsoever stupid folks sow, that they also reap; but not smart people like ourselves, we are cunning enough to reverse the laws of nature. We are so shrewd that we can gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. Therefore, while sin is always deadly, it is never so deadly as when it seems to give life. While it always impoverishes, it never robs so completely as when it seems to enrich. While it is always ghastly, it is never so ghastly
as when it glows. Happy is the sinner who is hard hit the first time he steps aside.

It has never been necessary for me to quit tobacco. Of course, there are worse habits than the use of tobacco - one is the habit of stomping all the feathers off those who do use it. But one reason that tobacco has never bothered me grows out of an experience of my boyhood. On one occasion my brother and I went to a mill, a day's journey from home. We had to spend the night on our way home. The next day, we came about noon to a little village and we were hungry. We pooled our interests to see what we could buy for dinner. My brother had just eaten nothing. I had a nickel - I was always a thrifty lad. Having carefully considered the matter, we bought two long cheap cigars. He had smoked before, therefore, he toyed with his. It was my first experience, therefore, I puffed mine like a dummy climbing a grade. I thought I was smoking on an empty stomach, I found out that it was not quite empty. But I have never cared to smoke since.

In my opinion, the greatest piece of fiction ever written in America is the Scarlet Letter. The two outstanding sinners in the story are Arthur Dimmesdale, the brilliant young minister, and Hester Prynne. Hester's sin is soon well known. It is proclaimed to the world by the little child that she holds in her arms, Pearl, she calls her. She names her Pearl because she has been bought at such a great price. Her sin is further proclaimed by the scarlet letter she is forced to wear on her bosom - the letter "A." She is also made to stand on the pedestal of shame where all the unkindly eyes of the town can glare at her. When she walks down the street, the children whisper a word at her. They do not understand the word, but it is all the more terrible. It seemed to Hester that all nature knew of her shame, that the very leaves on the trees were whispering the dark secret among themselves.

Naturally, she was a great sufferer. But how about the partner in her sin. Nobody suspects him, at least nobody but the wronged husband. He has a reputation for holiness. He seems to have gotten by, yet the suffering of Hester was as moonlight to
sunlight in comparison with that of the brilliant young minister. Seven long years he lives in a hell of his own making till at last one black night he flings out of bed to hurry down the street of Boston to climb upon the pedestal of shame and stand where Hester had stood seven years before. Standing there, he utters a wild wail which echoes through the streets and back into the dark hills, the background for which seems a company of devils had it and were tossing the horrid thing to and fro among themselves. Jacob's success in wrong doing makes his recovery far less hopeful.

II.

But Jacob did recover. How did it come about?

1. The prime mover in Jacob's redemption was God. That is always the case. Listen to the story, "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him." It was not Jacob that began the attack, it was his unknown antagonist. The first move toward our salvation is always God. In the old story of the Garden of Eden, when Adam had broken with God, it was not he that went up and down the aisles of Eden crying, "Oh my God, where art thou?" - it was God who came seeking for Adam.

2. Not only did God make the first move toward Jacob's redemption, but Jacob resisted God. Without this resistance, there could have been no wrestle. When I was a boy in school, wrestling was one of our chief past-times, but there was one boy that never played the game. He simply would not wrestle. How did he escape? By yielding. Whenever anyone undertook to force him to wrestle, he simply fell down in a heap - he put up no resistance at all, therefore, wrestling was impossible.

This experience of Jacob's is one that has been repeated and is being repeated in all our lives. We flatter ourselves many times that we are eager to do the will of God, that we would do it if He would only help us. But the tragedy of most of our lives is that, we are resisting God. God is trying to get us to go in one direction, and we are determined
to go in another. That is the secret of our restlessness. Why is the sea never calm? It is because the heights are calling to it and the muddy old earth will not let it go. It is torn between two calls - so are we.

3. But there came a time when Jacob ceased to resist and began to cling. There came a redeeming touch that made him conscious of his weakness and with tears, Hosea tells us he cried, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." When Jacob prayed like that, he was on the road to his coronation.

4. The final step in Jacob's redemption was his confession. "What is thy name?" That question is asked by his friendly foes. Now a name, you know, stands for character. Jacob knows what it means. In the early twilight, I think his face glows crimson as he hears the question, "My name," he answers, "you know my name is Jacob. I am a trickster, a cheat, a fraud. I have been so through the years."

Then what happened? That which always happens when in penitence we confess our sins. There came the prompt answer, "Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." And Jacob went forth from this hour to walk in newness of life and what happened to him may happen to us, if we confess our sins. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
Last Sunday evening we studied Esau. Esau, as we tried to point out, was an attractive man. He is a man who has a great many more friends than his brother Jacob. We like him. He is frank, open, generous, happy-go-lucky and athletic. If not, he would have been the very center of his circle had he been in one of our modern colleges. Of course there is that about him that the serius do not like, but all in all he is rather charming, especially if we do not know him too intimately.

But Jacob— we frankly dislike him. He is his mother’s pet. He is cold, scheming, selfish and slippery. He is looking out for number one. He is an artful dodger. He is thoroughly sly and completely capable of taking care of himself.

Yet with all the faults of one and the charms of the other, Jacob was far more promising than Esau. The trouble with Esau is that he has no appreciation of tomorrow. He is utterly indifferent to the future. He is completely careless of God. He does not hate religion. He does not battle against the spiritual. He simply completely ignores and neglects them. He is interested in the chase. He is interested in his dog and his bow and his arrows and his woman, but God, he never mentions Him. He has no slightest interest in Him.

Naturally he drifts through life and drifts upon his ruin. There is nothing to guide him. There is no mighty reason why he should do otherwise. Did you ever see the candle-fly come in from the dark and buzz around the lamp? You try to fight him away, but he insist on burning himself to death. Not that he has any great reason for doing so,— he is only playing.

And human history is literally filled with relics of Esau, who have burned their wings and have fallen into ashes and are merely living in the realm of bacon and beans.

Now, Jacob, with all his faults, and he had a multitude of them, did have a sense of the value of tomorrow. He had an eye for the future. He also had a sense of and appreciation of God. It is true that his conception of God was exceedingly unworthy. It is true that he valued God chiefly as an agency for the furtherance of his own schemes. He thought God only a help, but he also thought that He needed to be managed. But with all these misconceptions, there is far more hope for him than for a man who is dead to the spiritual altogether.

When Jacob, with the help of his mother, had stolen not only the birthright but the blessing from Esau, it became necessary for the young man to leave home and seek his fortune out in the world. As he left his home behind him and those who loved him he went out not with any sense of sin upon his conscience. You would think he would have done so, but such is not the case. He was not dogged by any feeling of guilt or of shame. He left home simply because he had a sickening fear that Esau might shoot one of his darts into his heart.

From his mother’s tent he made his way to his uncle Laban’s. You remember his romantic arrival, how he met the beautiful Rachel at the well, and how he loved her. That is another hopeful quality in Jacob. He could fall in love. Now, I suppose anybody can do that, but not only could he fall in love but he could stay in love through all the stormy and changing and trying years. I think Jacob’s constancy is one of the beautiful
stories of the Bible. You know most young folks have such a multitude of love affairs. They fall in and fall out with such consummate ease. Jacob’s heart could stay put. And he toiled, we read, for these seven years for his Rachel, and they seemed but as seven days for the love that he had for her. That is magnificent. That in itself is a prophecy of greatness.

"Unless you can muse in the crowd of day
On the absent face that fixed you,-
Unless you can love as the angels may
With the breadth of Heaven betwixt you,-
Unless you can dream that as love holds fast
Through behooving and unbehaving,-
Unless you can die when the dream is past,
Oh, dare not call it loving."

That meeting at the well - there is something beautiful about that. The scene laughs and ripples with romance and poetry. It is more musical even than the waters of the well. And Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept. Now, I confess I have never quite understood those tears. I imagine the young lady was a trifle embarrassed. Of course if he had been kissing in modern times there might have been some explanation. For instance, painter’s colic might suddenly have gripped him, for the art of daubing our faces was not lost when the savages were driven out of this country. Now, in all seriousness, if you are a sweet old maid who are a little bit bleached, I don’t blame you for using paint in the least, but you girls with the roses of health on your cheeks, - why, oh why? Use some of your mother’s jam. It will make you look more innocent, and I am sure it will be sweeter.

Jacob went to work for his uncle Laban. Now, it is interesting to see the cheater cheated. It is interesting to see the biter bit. For Laban is a chip off the old block, believe me. He is Shylock, the first. Jacob agrees to work seven years for Rachel. And then he marries her to wake up to the dismal realization that he has been tied on to that weak eyed sister Leah. Just between us, I fancy Leah would never have been married in any other fashion than by somebody’s slight of hand, either her own or Papa Shylock’s.

And what does Jacob say, - “Why hast thou beguiled me?” Do you not see that the young innocent is amazed? He is absolutely appalled at the trickery of his uncle Laban. Why, the man seems to have used deception with him. He seems to be a bit of a liar. That rasps upon Jacob’s unsullied nature. He has never heard of such outrageous treatment.

You see that Jacob is very human just like the rest of us. It is all right to use sharp methods and get the better of the other fellow so long as Jacob is the man who uses those sharp methods. It is all right to cheat and scheme and defraud so long as he is the perpetrator and not the victim. But when he has to take his own medicine, - there’s the rub. It is perfectly all right for you to express your opinion about the other fellow and tell what sort of a scoundrel or crank you think he is, but when he sits down in his crowd and tells what sort of a crank he thinks you are, then you jump and cry, “Wow” as if somebody had pricked you with a pin. And you begin a tirade on the evils of gossip. Yes, Jacob, the cheater, was cheated. God forgave him his sin at last, but how that old sin pursued him through all the years of his life. He was cheated out of his home. He was cheated out of his father. He was cheated out of his mother whose favorite he was. He was cheated out of his wages. He was cheated out of his wife. He was cheated out of his favorite son.
and cheated and cheated till cheating became a stench in his nostrils, till it became as gall to his lips, till it came to be a very pain in his heart that he hated and loathed with all the loathing of hell. He saved us.

But Jacob made good with his uncle. He matched trickery with trickery and he proved too much even for Uncle Laban. He out-witted the old man. And one day he slipped off over the plains driving vast herds of cattle and sheep and goats and camels and donkeys. The herds were strong and vigorous, much more so than those that he left behind for his uncle Laban. Where is Jacob going? He is going back home. He is going to the land of his fathers. He is going to the Promised Land, that country that God has given to himself and to his descendants. God has blessed him. He has prospered him. Twenty years ago he left home with nothing but a piece of bread and a crust of water. Now he is coming back a rich man. Yes, Jacob has made good.

Now he comes to a little brook that separates him from the land of his hopes. He sends across all that he possesses. He only is left on the other side. Soon he will go over. He will appease his stupid brother, and win the land of promise by his wits. And this brings us to the big crisis in Jacob's life. This brings him to that hour of testing which will determine whether he will continue the mean, withering, blighting, slippery man that he has been or whether he shall claim the rich possible manhood that God has locked within him.

Jacob is here in a peculiar danger. What is his danger? Just this, he seems to have made a success of sin. He seems to have made trickery and double-dealing entirely profitable. It is true that this old sin of more than twenty years ago has met him on the threshold of the Promised Land. It is true that it now threatens not only his life, but the lives of those that he loves. But he will get by. He will win yet. At that little brook whose name is the wrestler is making its way to the sea, so he will wrestle his way into the Land of Promise.

Now, sin is always dangerous, but it is never so dangerous, as when it seems to win. It is always a failure, but it never fails so signally as when it succeeds. It is always ghastly, but it never so ghastly as when it glows. The sinner is always pitied, but he is never quite so tragic as when he is putting his sin over. He is always lost, but never so hopelessly as when he fancies himself to be 'reversing the laws of nature and gathering grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.'

Happy, then, the young fellow that gets hard hit at his first encounter with sin. Happy the thief who does a heavy penalty for his first dishonesty. There is a chance that he may be saved. We had two young ladies arrested in our city for shoplifting. Their chances would have been more hopeful if they had been caught the first object they ever stole. It is far more hopeful now than if they had not been detected forty years hence. There is one habit I have never had to leave off and that is the tobacco habit. I suppose there is a big possibility that I might have been a user of the weed today but for one incident in my boyhood. My brother and I went to mill. We were delayed and had no dinner. As we passed through a town on the way we took account of our assets and there was only one nickel. We studied what to buy for our lunch and decided to buy two 'stogies.' We smoked I smoked on what I thought was an empty stomach. I found out it was not so empty after all. But I have never had any keen relish for a cigar from that day to this.

Successful sin - that is the supreme tragedy. I suppose the
The greatest piece of fiction ever written in America is "The Scarlet Letter." It is a study of sin. The two prime sinners of that wonderful book are Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Hester's sin is soon detected. It is blazoned to the world by the scarlet letter that she wears upon her bosom. It is blazoned by the child that she, an unmarried woman, holds to her breast. Pearl, she calls her. Pearl—because she has been bought at a great price with her mother's only treasure. Hester suffers, and suffers much. The children shout her sin at her. And it seems, as the author tells us, to argue so wide the diffusion of her crime as if all nature knew it, as if the very trees were whispering the dark secret among themselves.

But who is the partner of her sin? Ah, that is not known. At least only two know it. Later it is discovered by the old physician. But there was not a man in all Boston more highly respected, more tenderly loved than the young minister. Who had such a reputation for holiness, genuine piety, as Arthur Dimmesdale? He was the guilty one, but nobody knew but himself and Hester. And how wonderfully he had succeeded. How beautifully he had gotten by with it! How little chance there was of detection! Is Arthur Dimmesdale therefore happy? I say Hester suffered, but her pain is as Heaven to hell compared with the agony of this successful sinner.

I know of nothing in literature more full of tragedy than that hounded, tortured man throwing himself out of bed at the midnight hour and rushing to stand upon the pedestal of shame where Hester had stood these seven long years.

Do you hear that cry? The cry, the author tells us, that was echoed from house to house and reverberated from the hills in the background as if a company of devils, detesting so much of agony in it, were teasing and brandishing the horrid thing to and fro among themselves. That then came from the anguish bitten heart of Arthur Dimmesdale, a man who sinned, but who sinned without detection, the man who put it over and seemed to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.

So you see Jacob's danger. It is the danger of many of us tonight. It is the danger, first of all, of the preacher. I will preach to myself first. I do not have to aim after the fashion of Dimmesdale. I can simply do my work in the energy of the flesh. I can come to speak for my own glory instead of for the glory of Him who called me into His ministry. I can come to depend upon my own ability, upon my own mental powers to accomplish results rather than upon Him who says that "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." I can through my own self-sufficiency defeat my ministry and defeat God's purpose in my life.

Jacob made good. He was successful. God did not object to trickery so long as you turned some bit of the money that you won into His treasury. He is not especially against shady dealings. He is after all not of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He is on the side of the keenest wit. My wit is keen. He will be on my side. He will assist me even in my schemes of trickery and treachery.

Jacob is not altogether bad. Don't think he is. His case is as that case of many of us. There was something fine gold in him, but it was covered over by a very coarse and ugly clay. And God was trying to get at the gold and bring it out and polish it and make it beautiful, and make it usable. That is the reason why when Jacob started to step across this little brook into the land of his future hopes that God took hold of him and stayed him and held him fast.

Look at the picture. And Jacob was left alone. He had been so
busy previously that God had hardly had a chance at him. That is true of many of us. We are so busy with our work. We are so fiercely driven by our pleasures that we seldom have a moment to sit down alone with God and our conscience. God can not get a chance at us because He can never get us alone. It was Jacob's salvation here that he was left alone.

And Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled with him a man. God struggled with this scheming Jacob. God wrestled with him. The Word says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." But God's spirit does strive. God had been striving with Jacob through the disappointments of the past years, through the blessings and visions of the past years. God has been striving with you. He has been speaking to you through your dissatisfaction with yourself. He has been speaking to you through the bitter taste that sin has left in your mouth. He has been speaking to you through your aspirations and longings after a better life. God has been speaking to you, striving with you, trying to bring out the best there is in you.

God wrestled with Jacob. But for long Jacob resisted. Men do resist God. Again and again our Lord has to say to us, as He said to sinning Jerusalem, "I would, but ye would not." Christ lifts, but you hold back. Christ leads and moves and beckons, but you will not follow. That is the reason that your life is all knots and tangles tonight instead of the lovely poise that it ought to be. You resist God. You refuse to do what you know you ought to do. You refuse to follow where you know you ought to follow. You refuse to be what you know that you ought to be.

Then there came suddenly to this wrestling, scheming Jacob a revelation of his own weakness, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled. God shined the light of His spirit into his heart and he saw himself as he really was. He had prided himself upon his intellect, upon his sharp wit, but he saw how petty and worthless was this apart from the grace of God. He had prided himself upon his gain. He was a man of wealth, but all of his wealth became as fairy gold as the awful sense of his weakness came upon him.

In that illuminating hour Jacob realized what all men realize sooner or later. God help us, some of us realize it too soon. He realized that only one thing was worth struggling for, only one thing was worth wrestling and battling for, and that was to know God and be right with Him. And so from resisting he turned to clinging and he cries out of the passion of a great need, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

And now we are coming to the kingly side of this man's nature. He has been very disappointing. There are many attitudes in which we see him that make us ashamed. But here we find him at the sublimest task at which any man ever struggled. We find him at the sublime task of prayer. Hosea tells us that he wrestled with weeping and supplication. Jacob in tears - I am glad to see him sob. Yet I would hardly have expected it. But it is a grand moment. It is a great sight, this scheming, self satisfied, self sufficient man broken down in utter weakness before God, clinging to Him with the clinging arms of a little child and sobbing out these tear soaked words, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." This man is near upon the land of promise indeed.

There is only one thing now in the way. And that is soon removed. God asks him a question: "What is thy name?" The question was asked in the early twilight of a new day, but I fancy I can see Jacob blush even in the dim light. I fancy I can see that tinge of shame clean across the
At last Jacob sees himself as he really is. It is a good day for us when we get a good square look at ourselves. And now let me ask you this question. You do not have to tell me the answer. You do not have to tell it to your neighbor, but will you be fair and answer it in the listening ear of your Lord? What is thy name? What are you really as God sees you? What is your real character? Will you answer it? Some of us will say, "My name is indifference. My name is half-hearted Christian. My name is facing both ways. My name is lust."

At last Jacob was downright honest with God. He told Him his real name. That name was a confession. And no sooner was the word out of his mouth than he had God's gracious answer, "Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with man and hast prevailed."

Heart, it was true then and it is true today, that if we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Whatever you are tonight God can make something better out of you if you will let Him. There are possibilities of which you yourselves do not dream.

This story then comes to us with a message of infinite hope. We may be greatly disappointed in ourselves. We may be greatly discouraged. But God sees great possibilities within us. He will bring us to their realization if we will only cling to Him. Esau, do you remember that scheming brother of yours, what a slick citizen he was? He is a prince now. I suppose it would have been hard for Esau to have believed it, or for Laban to have believed it, or for anybody that had ever known Jacob before. But a prince he was, for that was the name that God Himself gave, and God knew.

And tonight Jesus is saying to you and to me, "I will give you a new name. Are you tired of the old? Are you tired of being a rude, uncut block of marble? Come to Christ clinging to Him and He will release and make evident the glorious angel that is pent up within,"
"Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel."

This is a fascinating story. There is a perennial youthfulness about it over which the years have no control. To it is a record of an event that took place so many centuries ago, it is as gripping in its interest as the day upon which it was written. To it is a very old story, it is as fresh at this moment as the first flower of spring or as the first blush of the morning. The secret of its fascination is the record of a human experience. It is the story of a supreme miracle. It tells how a bad man was made into a good man. There is nothing more marvelous than that. The building of a world, the sowing of stars, the kindling of suns—these are all little things in comparison with the re-making of a man.

Jacob a prince. It is hard to believe it. Suppose you had gone to Jacob-smarting with injustice and embittered with the wrongs that he had suffered at the hands of Jacob, and said:—"Do you know Jacob? His eyes might have flashed a bit as he answered "Indeed I do." "Well, he has become a prince." I am not sure that it would have been altogether safe to have carried such a message to this husky hunter and hardman. He might have done you positive violence. Or would you have fared better if you had gone to Jacob's indignant father-in-law as he stood among his depleted hards and told him of Jacob's transformation. Neither would have believed you. We would not believe the story ourselves, the wonder of it is so great, were it not for the fact that we have seen like transformations in other lives.

It is easy to see how the story of Jacob's transformation would have been very difficult for those who had known Jacob in other years to believe. The wonder of it cannot but grip our hearts and minds even at this day. The reason for this is obvious.

1. Jacob was a supplicator. He was a trickster and a crook. He was a man who took delight in outshaping his opponent. He enjoyed living by his wits. He was not a cheat because of one single act of which he was guilty; he was crooked at heart. And, being crooked at heart, he was crooked in his outward dealings.

He had a long record of sharp dealings back of him. Not only was he a crook, but he was confirmed in his crookedness. One day he drove a sharp bargain with his hungry and sensual brother and beat him out of his birthright. A little later, by a bit of sharp dealing and lying he cheated him out of his blessing. His record at his father's tent was not at all envied.
The Prince -2.

After the stealing of the blessing it became necessary for Jacob to leave. As he went out from the tents of his father he did not go shamed by a sense of sin. He did not go hounded by remorse for his wrong doing. He went simply because he was afraid of his wronged and angered brother. He went because he had a sickening dread that if he did not go one day he would feel one of Esau's arrows at his heart. So he had made his way into a strange country because he was too crooked to stay at home.

From the tents of his father he made his way to the tents of his Uncle Laban. Here he entered upon his service and continued his course in trickery and sharp dealing. It is true that his Uncle Laban was a man a bit like himself. They were both chips off a common block. But Jacob showed himself the sharper of the two. He outwitted his uncle and his father-in-law in the long run. Then one day he took his way toward the land of promise, driving by far the most vigorous of the herds of cattle and goats and camels before him. Where our story begins he has reached the borders of his home land in security and safety.

2. The wonder of Jacob's transformation is further heightened by the fact not only that he was a confirmed crook, but that he had made a success of his crookedness. In every way so far as outward eye could see he had prospered. In the first place he had prospered in love. When he had fled from his father's tents, the first one he saw when he reached his destination was Rachel. She was down at the well. And her face was as radiant as a rose and her voice was musical as the water of the well. And Jacob fell in love with her at first sight and determined to have her for his own.

The scene laughs and sings with romance and poetry. It speaks well for Jacob that in spite of his crookedness he could fall in love and stay in love for a long space of years. Jacob kissed Rachel, the record reads. We are not surprised at that. We have an idea that, assuming the willingness of Rachel, such a task would not be at all unpleasant. But the rest of the sentence is a little puzzling. "Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept." I have never quite understood those tears. It seems to be rather a time for laughter. I am not sure just how Rachel felt about it. But love her he did and won her in spite of the fact that father Laban was no mean schemer himself. And now as he camps for the night Rachel, with her children, is in company.

Then too he had prospered in goods. He had grown rich. He remembered as the evening shadows gather how he went out of this little block-hunt with nothing but a staff in his hand and fear in his heart and a sob in his throat. And now he is coming back, but he is not alone. His wives and his children are with him. Vast herds are also with him. And poverty has come to wealth. And this he has done partly by the blessing of God, but far more by his own wit. He has been tricky. He has been dishonest. But his trickery and dishonesty have paid him well.

The fact that Jacob has succeeded in his sin puts him in peculiar danger. Sin is always dangerous. But it is never so dangerous as when it succeeds. It is always deadly, but it is never so deadly as when it puts on the appearance of a life-giver. It is always impoverishing, but it never robs so surely as when it seems to enrich. It is always ghastly, but it is
The greatest piece of fiction I think that has been written in America is "The Scarlet Letter". It is, as you remember, a study of sin. The two outstanding principals of the book are Hester Prinne and Arthur Dimmesdale. Hester's sin is soon found out and terribly punished. It is blazoned to the world by the scarlet letter that she is compelled to wear upon her bosom. It is further proclaimed by the little child that she holds in her arms. Pearl she calls her, because she has bought her at a great price with her only treasure. Everybody knows her guilt. Even the little children shout a name at her that they themselves do not understand. But to Hester it seems to argue so wide a diffusion of her crime as if all nature knew of it, as if the very leaves on the trees were whispering the dark secret among themselves.

Of course in the glare of all this publicity Hester suffers and suffers deeply. But how about the partner in her crime? Nobody knows his guilt. He is a popular, honored and much loved young minister. They regard him as one of the ripest of the saints. There is not one of all the multitude that stare with unkind eyes at Hester that dreams that Arthur Dimmesdale could be guilty. Hester did not get by with her sin. But the preacher has succeeded. He has, in the language of the street, put it over.

But which of these two think you is the greater sufferer? There is but one answer to that question. The suffering of Hester is as heaven to hell in comparison to the suffering of Arthur Dimmesdale. The more he was revered the greater became his agony. Then at last, after seven long years, of anguish unspeakable, he is hounded from his bed one night and scourged by his own anguish to stand upon the pedestal of shame where Hester had once stood. There he utters a wild cry, that the Arthur tells, was echoed from house to house, and reverberated from the hills in the background, as if accompanying devils, detecting so much agony in him, were tossing the horrid thing to and fro among themselves.

Happy, therefore, as another has pointed out, is the wrong-doer who is hit hard the first time he turns aside to evil. Happy is the man whose feet are pricked with thorns the first time he turns from the way of righteousness. Happy the criminal who pays well in heart for his first crime. Happy the youthful sinner who learns at the very beginning that sin is a terrible and deadly thing. No greater calamity can come to any wrong doer than the conviction that they can make wrong pay; that while sin may find the other out, they themselves can outwit sin; that while others must reap as they sow, they themselves can reap a harvest of wheat from the sowing of tares.

It is easy to see how prosperity in sin tends to confirm the sinner in his evil ways. If wrong is more profitable than right, then why give up the wrong to choose the right. If we can gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, why trouble ourselves with any other kind of planting. The successful sinner becomes morally color blind. Thus blinded he tends to hold on to sin with a persistency that is not true of one who begins at once to pay the penalty. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil."

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"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." — Genesis 32:24-28.

I.

This story comes to us out of a distant past. It comes wearing a garb that is strange to our modern eyes. It speaks a language that sounds foreign to our ears. But in spite of all this it is as gripping and fascinating today as when it was first told. It has an immortal youthfulness about it over which the years have no power. The dewdrops of the morn are still upon it, undried by the burning suns of all the centuries. This is the case because it is the record of human experience. It is an account of the supremest of all miracles, the remaking of a man. For the creating of worlds and the broadcasting of stars — these are little things in comparison to the making of a bad man into a good man.

In calling Jacob a bad man, we do not mean, of course, that there was no good in him. In spite of much base alloy, there is also some genuine gold. This we say, because in spite of the fact that upon first acquaintance we do not like him at all. He is not half so attractive as his happy-go-lucky brother, Esau. But he has certain traits of character that put him far ahead of this profane brother. For one thing, he has some appreciation of the spiritual. He is
after a fashion, religious. He has some sense of God. It is true he thinks of God as one whom he is to use instead of one who is to use him. He is a being that requires quite a bit of managing rather than one who is to get hold of his own life and manage him. But in spite of all misconceptions, he has an appreciation of the unseen to which his brother is a stranger, and counts the spiritual leadership of his gens as a prize to be struggled for rather than a useless something to be sought for a mess of pottage.

Then Jacob could fall in love and stay in love through long, trying years. Any man who can do this has much of good in him. When Jacob met Rachel at the well, that love that he gave her was more than a passing infatuation. He worked for her willingly for seven years. He then, as he thought, married her, to find that he had captured weak-eyed Leah instead. Of course Jacob is not the only man who ever courted a Rachel to find himself in later years married to a Leah and vice versa. That is an experience tragically common.

But though foxy Laban won the first part of their game of wits, Jacob did not give up. It is a bit amusing to hear the wail of this cheater as he finds himself cheated. "Thou hast beguiled me," Jacob cries in innocent amazement. Really he has never heard of such baseness. He did not think there was such a thing as trickery in all the world. He is just like many another, cheating is keen and clever so long as he is the cheater. It is only when he becomes the victim that it is an ugly and revolting something. Putting across a sharp deal is altogether commendable providing he is the one that puts it across. It is only despicable and vile when it
is put across on himself. But in spite of the fact that he knew himself cheated, he worked seven other years for the woman that he loves. And we read that it seemed but seven days for the love that he had for her. There is something fine, I repeat, in one who can love like that.

But in spite of these virtues there is yet so much of moral and spiritual ugliness about Jacob that we cannot but resent him. He is out after the main chance. He is desperately selfish. He is a born trickster. He is willing to take any sort of advantage in order to win his ends. Therefore, in spite of the fact that he is religious after a fashion, there is so much of evil, of downright crookedness in him that it is simply impossible for him to ever realize God's purposes in his life unless he undergoes a radical change. We cannot but feel that there is little prospect of such a radical change taking place. This is true for at least two reasons.

1. Jacob is no longer young. He has run far past that impressionable period when change is easy. "The man was above forty years old upon whom this miracle of healing was showed," declares Dr. Luke, as he tells us the story of the transformation of the beggar who had once sat by the "Gate Beautiful." We can catch the light of wonder and wide-eyed amazement that looks out from his eyes as he writes. He knows that miracles of healing after forty are rare indeed. Jacob had reached forty. He was in the prosaic middle passage where there was little hope of any great spiritual change.

2. Jacob's chances of change were further lessened by the fact that he had been highly successful in wrong-doing. Success even in a worthy enterprise is a type of wine that is often quite heady. I have known more than one good man to become intoxicated by it. But success in wrong-doing is far
more dangerous. And Jacob has outsmarted and hoodwinked everybody in whom he has come in contact. Labon, who saw himself a bit of a Shylock drew the first blood. But the final victory was with Jacob. Labon doubtless prided himself that he was hard to get around, but his young nephew beat him at his own game. Had Jacob been in the dry-goods business instead of live stock, he would doubtless have had at least half a dozen successful fires during the twenty years of his sojourn with Laban. As it was, he disappeared across the plain one day a rich man, leaving Uncle Laban sadder and wiser because of their efforts to cheat each other.

Now the danger of success in wrong-doing, as another has pointed out, is that it tends to make the wrong-doer morally color blind. He comes to believe that while others see as they see, he can somehow contrive the laws of nature and reap a harvest of wheat from the sowing of tares. Prosaic, stupid souls may go on gathering grapes from the vineyards and figs from the fig trees, but he has cunning to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. The sin, therefore, is never so disastrous as when it seems to succeed. It is never so deadly as when it seems to give life. Happy is the man who is sharply bitten the first time he ever reaches forth for the unclean. Happy is he who is sharply stung the first time he ever feels from the path of virtue.

For instance, I do not use tobacco. There are worse habits I know, one of which is forever stamping the feathers off of those who do use it. But I have never had the slightest temptation in this direction since an experience I had when I was a boy. My brother and I were sent to a mill with a load of wheat. There were so many customers ahead of us that we were
forced to spend the night. The next morning we started for home, which was almost a day's journey away. About noon we came to a village. As we were desperately hungry, we pooled our assets and decided what we would buy. My brother had even nothing. I had five cents. I was always a thrifty fellow. After careful study we decided to buy two stogies. They were long, slender cigars, made out of the but ends of strong tobacco. My brother had smoked before. He, therefore, trifled with his. I determined to waste nothing mine. It was to be my dinner and I wanted a full meal. I thought I was smoking on an empty stomach. I learned my mistake. But I have never wanted to smoke since.

The greatest piece of fiction ever produced in America is the "Scarlet Letter." The two outstanding characters of this book, as you remember, partners in sin, are Hester and Arthur Dimmesdale. Hester is soon detected. Her shame is proclaimed to the world. The scarlet letter which she wears upon her breast proclaims it. The pedestal of shame upon which she stands proclaims it. It is further proclaimed by the little girl that she holds in her arms. "Pearl" she calls her, because she has bought her at a great price, with a mother's only treasure. She becomes a great and patient sufferer, but her pain grows steadily less with the passing of the years.

But Arthur Dimmesdale - no one suspects him. At least no one but old Roger Chillingworth. He maintains a growing reputation for saintliness. But the scarlet letter that Hester wears outwardly, he wears inwardly upon his heart. At last, one desperate night, after seven long years of torture, he flings...
himself out of bed, hurries down the streets of Boston, mounts
the pedestal of shame where Hester had stood so long ago.
Standing there, he utters a wild wail that echoes from house to
house and is reverberated from the hills in the background,
as if a company of demons, detecting so much of agony in it
were tossing the horrid thing too and fro among themselves.
Hester grinne, the detected sinner suffered much, but her
suffering was as star-light to sun-light in comparison with
leeful unmerited detention and
that of the man who seemed to succeed.

II.

But Jacob, in spite of the fact that he is no longer
young, and in spite of the fact that he has to this hour gotten by with his sin, was yet remade. Let us look at the process.
How did it come about?

1. The first factor in Jacob's transformation was
God. That is ever the case. Listen to his story, "And Jacob
was left alone and there wrestled with him a man until the greaking of the day." Who began this wrestling? Not Jacob, but
this Divine Being who is trying to keep Jacob from missing the
promised land and from losing his own soul. In every man's
salvation, it is God who takes the initiative. When Adam fell we would naturally expect him to have cried out in his lonliness,
"O, God, where art Thou?" But such was not the case. It was
God who did the seeking. It was a broken-hearted Father who
cried, "Adam, where art thou?" "We love Him because He first
loved us!"

2. The second fact we notice about this strange
wrestling is that Jacob at first resisted God. We sometimes
look upon Jacob's struggle as a model of what prayer should be.
And Jacob did some real praying before the morning dawned. But
that early struggle was born not of Jacob's clinging to God, but of his resistance. It was Jacob's antagonism that made this wrestling possible. When I was a school boy, wrestling was very popular. But there was one boy who simply would not wrestle. At a mere touch he would topple over.  There can be no struggle where there is no resistance. This wrestling means then, that God was trying to get Jacob to go in one direction while he was determined to go in another. God was trying to get Jacob to ascend, while he was determined to go down. God was trying to get Jacob to say, "Thy will be done", while he was bent on having his own way.

Now just how God wrestled with Jacob we do not know. The struggle here seems to have been in some measure outward. But the 'how' is not the essential part. It is the fact that God did wrestle with him is essential, and God wrestles with us still. He strives with us, speaks to us, brings to bear every ingenuity that infinite wisdom and infinite love can contrive to bring us to our best, as Jacob, resist him. Why are we not as strong and wholesome and radiant as the grace of God can make us? Why does not the beauty of the Lord our God rest upon every one of us? It is seen of our own resistance of God. "I would", says Jesus, and determinedly, "that ye did not."

3. At last there came a time when Jacob ceased to resist and began to cling. There came that revealing touch that told him of his own utter insufficiency. He realized that God was an absolute necessity, that he could simply not arrive without Him, that life was not worth living without Him. Therefore, with prayers and tears, as Hosea tells us, he clings to Him. It is great to see this self-sufficient, wiry
and cunning Jacob with his keen eyes blinded by tears. And now the God who has come to the attack seems to want to get away. "Let me go," he says, "for the day breaketh."

It seems a strange word and yet we find the same story in the New Testament. One black night of storm, the disciples were fighting a losing fight with a raging sea. At last they saw Jesus coming toward them, walking on the water. But they are mistaken. He is not actually coming towards them, he is going to pass them by. It is only after an invitation that he gets in the boat with them. And those two disciples who went to Emmaus, in spite of their burning hearts, they are going to leave at this very moment from Jesus at the door, but he made as if he would come no further. It is only as they constrained Him that he entered in. Jesus will knock at your door, but if he ever enters, you must open. He refuses to go where he is not wanted, but the one who feels to go where he is made welcome is entrance. And that is just what Jacob did. He opened the door and opened it with an invitation that never has been, or never will be denied. "I will not let Thee go," he sobbs out in grim determination except Thou bless me. Thou hast shown me my spiritual poverty. Thou hast also shown me my possible wealth. Therefore, I am determined to possess my possessions. Come weal or woe, poverty or wealth, life or death, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Certainly Jacob stands upon the threshold of a new and glorious day.

But there is yet one thing in the way of his receiving the blessing. He must face his sin, and confess it, and put it away. "What is thy name?" is the strange question. And Jacob's face is crimson from the long struggle, yet I think it
grows redder as he answers, "Lord, Thou knowest, my name is Jacob. I am a trickster, a fraud. I am a man who has lived by his wits. I have been as slippery as an eel. My name is Jacob." And what said this friendly foe to that confession?

In a town where I was preaching in the West some years ago, an officer of the law touching a gentleman on the shoulder said, "What is your name?" And when the man told his real name, he was arrested and taken back to Kentucky and put on trial for his life for a crime that he had committed twenty-seven years before. But when Jacob told his name, God did not arrest him. He gave him a new name because he had given him a new character. And when Jacob turned his face toward his loved ones, the sunrise was bursting from beyond the hills. But brighter than that was the shining of the Sun of Righteousness in his transformed heart.

And now in behalf of Him whose message I deliver, I bring you this question, "What is thy name?" I am not asking that you tell me. You know what it is, and God knows. Stop your resisting, yield to Him. Make your confession and He will give you a new name. But if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So shall we be to cross the brook that leads us into the world. Shall we cross it our same old selves, or shall we cross it as new creations in Christ Jesus? Shall we go alone or shall we go in the fellowship of Him who loves us and who gave Himself up for us? Believe me, God is here and now, doing His infinite

heat to get you to take at His hand that new name, that means a new character and a new life.