

YOUTH AND COMMON-SENSE

is the lad to be trained
"How ~~shall we train the child?~~ What is he to be?"

--Judges 13:12 (Moffatt)

I

Here is a question that
~~This text~~ comes out of what is perhaps the oldest book of the Bible. But, *in spite of that fact, it is by no means antiquated but highly pertinent*, it brings to us the freshest and most vital question that we are engaged in a world-wide way. We are planning & praying for an answer which bears upon the lives of *millions of people*. This is a big statement I know. There are many *pressing* vital problems that are *pressing*, that are clamoring for a solution.

But the biggest *question* problem of this day, and of every day, is the child *problem*. If we settle that aright, we may find an answer to every question. But if we fail to find the proper answer to the child question, all else ends in tragedy.

1. This is the biggest question for the child. "How shall we train the lad? What is he to be?" Upon the answer to that question depends the whole future of our boys and girls. We can answer that question in such a fashion as to rob our children at once of their highest joy and their highest usefulness. We can answer it in such a way as miserably to cheat them both in the life that now is as well as that which is to come. But we can answer it in such a way as to make life unspeakably rich here and unspeakably rich through eternity. The kind of man that your boy becomes, the kind of woman that your girl becomes, is certainly the most important question in all the world for the boy and the girl themselves.

2. Then, no question can be of greater importance to the parents. *because a boy or girl*
What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his boy?

Did you read that pathetic article from a heartbroken mother that appeared in one of our papers last week? This mother was offering to sell herself to science, to do anything, in order to raise money to try to save her son from going to prison. Then, she added this pathetic word: "I neglected him when he was a child. I could not give him any of my time. He had no training. He never went to Sunday School a single time." Now she has lost him. There is no compensation for such a loss.

While I was pastor in Memphis, there was a certain father, an earnest business-man, who was making money rapidly. He had a son to whom he was devoted. He was willing to give that son anything except himself, a bit of his own time, his own attention. Every morning before he went to work, he slipped into the room and left a bill--sometimes one dollar, sometimes five--for the boy to spend that day. But his plan did not work. The boy was brought home one day from a distant city in hand-cuffs. This father had made a pile of money while he neglected his boy, but there was no compensation for his loss. Your child may be to you a source of unmeasured joy. He may be a source of unmeasured heartache. He may teach you "not sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

3. "How shall we train the ^{boy} ~~child~~? What is he to be?" This is not only the biggest question for the lad himself and for his parents. It is the biggest question for the church, for the community, for the city, for the nation, ^{for the world} ~~as a whole~~. This is true because the church, the community, the city, and the nation, all at once depend upon what we do with the boys and girls that are now in our arms. An army of invasion is on the march in this land. This army is going to take over every

home, every church, every school, every place of business, every political position. That army is composed of our boys and girls. If we have trained them as we should, tomorrow will see a far better world than today is seeing. If we have failed, it will see a worse than today has seen. The biggest question, then, for the child, for the parents, and for society is the child question.

II

How shall we train the lad? What is he to be? Is ^{there} an answer ^{to} that question, or is there not? Can we determine the moral quality of the lives of our boys and girls, or can we not? Is the answer to this question a matter of training, or a matter of chance? We believe that it is a matter of training. We believe that it is within our power, that it is our privilege, to determine the moral and spiritual quality of the lives of our boys and girls. We believe that children are not so much born as made.

1. This is the contention of the Bible. This Book is of all ancient books most appreciative of childhood. Other ancient books think little of the child, but the Bible laughs and romps with them. It tells of the boy Samuel hearing God's call in his young and tender years. It pictures Moses as a little baby cast adrift on the Nile. It shows us Jesus, the Son of God, coming as a ^{child} ~~babe~~ in Jerusalem. It shows Jesus gathering little children into his arms.

Not only does the Bible frolic and laugh with children, but it affirms that children are not so much born as made. It declares that "if we train up a child in the way it should go, when it is old, it shall not depart from it." We are made to see that Samuel became a saint of God not by accident but by virtue of his training. We are made to realize

that Moses was led to make his high choice not by mere chance but because of the training he had received at the hands of his consecrated mother. Over and over again this Book affirms that what a child becomes depends upon his training.

2. The verdict of the Bible that children are not so much born as made is sanctioned by modern science. If there is a conviction upon which the modern psychologists are agreed it is that what a child becomes depends more largely than anything else upon its training. As a rule children love rabbits and hate and fear snakes, but actual experiments have demonstrated that a child may be taught to fear a rabbit and to pet a snake. Modern science, therefore, adds its verdict to that of the Bible in saying that children are not so much born as made.

3. This is also the verdict of common-sense. Ours is an ordered world. There is nothing of which we can be more sure. "Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." What a man sows in his field, he may count upon reaping. What he sows in the development of his livestock, he may count upon reaping. It would be strange indeed if we could determine the harvest in our fields and among the lower orders of life, and yet it were a matter of mere chance with regard to our own children.

Now and then we hear some speaker tell ~~us~~ what youth is thinking. The implication is that youth is set off in a water-tight compartment and is thinking something original, something that nobody else ever thought of before. No greater nonsense was ever spoken. What is youth thinking? It is thinking exactly what its elders are thinking. It is thinking exactly what it is taught to think. That is the reason that youth in one country think one thing, while youth in another country think another. What is youth thinking in Russia? What it is taught to think! What is

it thinking in Germany? Something vastly different, but what it is taught to think. There is no ~~6 address~~, crazy absurdity that youth will not embrace with enthusiasm if it is so trained. There is no high and holy plan of sacrificial living that it will not embrace if it is so trained. This is a conviction of the Bible, of science, and of common-sense.

4. Not only so, but this is a fact of experience. What is the lad to be? Experience teaches that he will be what our training by precept and example make him. What is the Catholic child to be? The leaders of the Church have no doubt; he is to be a Catholic. Here is a Jewish baby. What is he to be? He is to be a Jew. Their certainty of this fact is not absurd. It is plainest common-sense. Here is a protestant baby. What is he to be? Often we say, "The Lord only knows!" And then we leave his training to mere chance. He will be what his parents and his teachers make him. Let me haunt you with this fact: Children are not so much born as made. What they become depends upon their training.

III

Now this becomes at once our highest opportunity and privilege. We can make Christians of our boys and girls if we will. The fact that you are here indicates that you believe that that is a goal worth seeking. There is not in you that you could do for your child that will do so much toward guaranteeing his future happiness and future usefulness as that. There is nothing like with religion to make life in the highest sense worthwhile. We want our children both to do something worthwhile and to be something worthwhile. The best way to make this possible is to Christianize them.

If you doubt this, look at the facts. If our training will make our children Christian and if being Christian will make them in the highest sense successful, why then are there so many failures among the sons and daughters of ministers? You have heard, of course, that preachers' children are the worst in the world. That is familiar to the dullest of us. Why is that the case? The first reason is because it isn't. Instead of being the case, some eight hundred per cent more of them make good than the sons and daughters of any other group. There is only one class of people in the world whose children have a higher average than ministers', and that is the children of missionaries, and, of course, they are a type of minister themselves. The fact that eight times as many sons and daughters of the parsonage as those of any other profession ^{or a few of them} are tremendously arresting. Many of us preachers are exceedingly faulty. What marvelous sons and daughters we might have if we were only willing to pay the price of Christianizing them!

1. The first fact, then, to which I call your attention is that a child can be a Christian. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." That means that the Kingdom of Heaven is made up of little children and those who succeed, by the grace of God, in becoming like little children. A child can be a Christian because the characteristics that go to make a Christian belong by nature to a child. Take faith, for instance. A child naturally believes. Then, a child is naturally humble. Finally, a child is naturally loyal to what it loves.

2. Not only can a child be a Christian, but it can become a Christian easier than anybody else. It can do so because it possesses the God-given qualities mentioned above. It can do so because it has not bound itself by the bonds of an evil companionship, or the bonds of

evil habits that so often prove too much for those of us who are older grown. A child can be a Christian and become a Christian easier than anybody else.

3. Not only can a child become a Christian and become one easier than anybody else, but a child makes the best Christian. That it should do so is only the plainest common-sense. Who make the best golfers? Not those who begin at forty, but those who begin in childhood! Who make the best tennis players? Who make the best men and women? Not those who were allowed to run wild and captured at fifty! The folks who are carrying on the work of the church today are those who were won to Christ as boys and girls.

4. Not only can a child become a Christian easier than anybody else, not only does he make the best Christian, but, if he does not become a Christian as a child, the chances are very great that he will never do so. "Can a man be born again when he is old?" Yes, he can be. But it is a rare miracle. If your child slips through your fingers without a vital committal of himself to Jesus Christ and His church, the chances are that he will have missed that high privilege forevermore.

IV

If we are to Christianize our children, to whom are we to look for the accomplishment of that supreme task? This is work that we can not intrust to mere chance. We cannot expect to attain this by leaving our children to the education of the streets. We cannot leave the task to the movies. We cannot even leave it to the public schools. Some of our public schools give definite religious training. Some of them do not. There are two agencies to which we must look if this fine possibility is to be a reality.

to attend Church as boys and girls. Eight hundred ninety-two ~~and~~ *Flood.*
~~in the affirmative.~~ Now arrested; of all those who were serving the
 Church in an official capacity, only eight out of nine hundred had
~~returned after going home on Sunday morning.~~ *had and found that it was*

2. The ~~second~~ *first and most important* agency for the ~~bring about~~ of the Christianizing of
 our boys and girls is the home. If the home is what it ought to be, the
 child might go out to vital Christian living in spite of a very defective
 Church. But the Church is laboring under a heavy handicap if it does
 not have the cooperation of the home. When, therefore, your child
 expresses a desire to unite with the Church, ~~in heaven's name,~~ do not
 dismiss the matter by saying, "You don't know what you are talking about."
 You do not take that attitude toward any other problem that concerns the
 child. If you give him a penny, you take pains to explain the meaning
 of that penny to him, and the importance of saving. In the name of all
 that is reasonable, why do you not give yourself and him a fair chance
 when it comes to the supreme values?

To help our children to be Christian, the first step is for the
 father and mother themselves to be Christian. The child honors you.
 You stand to them as a supreme source of comfort and authority. What
 a sense of insecurity it gives to the child when those that it loves
 best fail to back it up in this biggest of enterprises. Every home ought,
 so far as possible, to have a family altar. Every child ought to have
 the privilege of hearing the word of God read in the home and of hearing
 their parents lead them to the Throne of God in prayer.

But above all else, the atmosphere of the home ought to be Christian.
 The most sensitive thing in all the world is the mind of a child. Here
 is an actual happening: In the hospital was a baby being nursed on a

1. We are to look to the Church. The Church through its Sunday School and through its ministry of preaching is to help us to Christianize our boys and girls. Of course, much of this work depends upon the teachers in the Sunday School. Much of it can be done if the child is encouraged by its parents to attend the worship services of the Church. How soon should a child unite with the Church? As soon as it desires to do so! To keep a child out of the Church because it does not know everything for which the Church stands is as absurd as to keep a child away from school because he is not educated.

Do not dismiss the matter by saying, your child will not understand what the preacher is saying. That is true, perchance, of some things the preacher says. But any minister who persistently speaks in a manner beyond the understanding of a ten-year-old child is not in reality *reaching* ~~speaking to~~ adults. He is merely baring them. *any of you who bring my* ~~any of you~~ *are accustomed to* your children to Church have doubtless been amazed many times by what they have told you about the services. Not only is it good for children to attend Church because of what they ~~hear~~ *learn*, but because it is the forming of ^a right habit. A good life is made up of good habits.

I am not forgetting that brotner who will tell you that the reason he does not attend Church today is because he had too much Church when he was a boy. *In these days during his formers parents he might be* ~~no mouths this old chestnut as if he were the first one~~ *Even so I make bold to say that* ~~that ever said it. Possibly he is telling the truth.~~ *not for every one* ^{man} who is staying away from Church this morning because he had to go as a boy or ~~girl~~, there are ten thousand ^{who} ~~that~~ are staying away because they did not have to go as boys and girls. *It is reported that at a certain* ~~There was a quarterly conference,~~ *composed of nine hundred* ~~thousands,~~ *held in* ~~held in~~ *Brooklyn, New York,* ~~some years ago),~~ *the District Superintendent asked,* ~~many~~ *had been accustomed*

General members of the District

bottle. The nurse that had it in charge was passing through a period of stress and worry. The baby lost its appetite and ceased to sleep well. But as soon as the nurse was changed, these symptoms disappeared. Religion is taught in some instances, but in far more it is caught. If the atmosphere of the home is one of peace, the children will enter into peace as naturally as flowers bloom at the kiss of the springtime. If it is the opposite, there will be turmoil and confusion.

I am speaking to you in the realization that you are devoted to your children. They are your dearest treasure. I am telling you what the greatest leaders in religion and in science say, and that is that the supreme need of the child is the right kind of religion, and that we can train them in this religion if we will. Are we willing for the undertaking? If nothing else ought to bring us to Christ and to his Church, this ought to be enough. It is this Christ and His Church that offer to my child its best opportunity for full and fruitful living. Therefore, if not for my own sake, for his, I will lead the way.

"To feel his little hand in mine, so clinging and so warm,
To know he thinks I am strong enough to keep him safe from harm,
To see his simple faith in all that I can say or do,
It sort of shames a fellow, but it makes him better too;
And I would not disappoint his trust for anything on earth,
Nor let him know how little I just naturally am worth;
And I reckon it is easier that better road to climb
With his little hand behind me to push me all the time.
I simply am a better man than what I used to be
Because I have this chap at home that thinks the world of me."

"How shall we train the child? What is he to be?" The answer is up to you.

THE BABY

How shall we train the lad? What is he to be?

Judges 13:12 (Moffatt)

This is an arresting question. It is being asked by an eager father and mother about a baby that has not yet been born. How wise they are, they know that an important part of a child's training should begin with the parents and grandparents. This question comes out of, perhaps the oldest book in the Bible. At that distant day, it was the most important question that could possibly be asked. Many centuries have passed since then, but the importance of this question has not diminished in the least. It is still the most gripping question that confronts us as parents, as a church, as a community, and as a nation.

I.

Of all the members of the family group, the baby is perhaps the most fascinating. There is nothing so gripping as a normal, live baby. We maybe interested for a little while in rugged mountains and majestic rivers, we maybe interested in shimmering lakes and booming seas, we maybe interested in flaming comets and shooting stars, but about the most vitally interesting something in all the world is a baby.

1. The baby fascinates us by his adorable weakness. We like strong things I know, we delight in the strength of a fine oak, in the ruggedness of the cliffs, in the prowess of the athlete, but we also like weak things. Weakness gives us an opportunity to do something God-like.

What is God doing morning, noon and night from eternity to eternity? He is putting his infinite strength at the disposal of our finite weakness. He is undergirding our helplessness with his everlasting arm of help. And some of us have understood God better since we have felt the gripping of baby fingers and the hug of baby arms.

- 2. The baby fascinates us with its amazing power. What a strong something is a little child. "A little child shall lead them" said a wise prophet of the long ago. And how many have been led from selfishness to unselfishness, from weakness to strength, from darkness to light by the clinging hand of a little child. We love to watch Little Nell as she puts her cooling hand upon the feverish hand of her old grandfather to lead him to newness of life. We delight to watch Silas Marner, the hard and soured and miserly weaver transformed by the love of little Effie. We delight to see the ^{mother} Cossette in Hugo's immortal story brought back from a life of shame to one of sacrifice and purity by the magic power of a babies touch. A child fascinates us by its tremendous power.

3. Then a baby fascinates us most of all by its marvelous possibilities. It is thrilling to hold an acorn in ones hand and realize that thus you are holding a giant of the forest. But how infinitely more fascinating is a baby. The possibilities of a little child are almost without limit. In its soul maybe the very depths of hell and the heights of Heaven. It may become the prophet of a new day, or it may lead a terrible treck back toward the jungle. That child may be the bearer of a new message of light. Or it may come with new power for darkness in its hands.

One has pictured Thomas Carlyle holding a little baby in his arms, he is looking into its face with wide-eyed wonder. He cannot leave off marvelling at it. "Just to think" he said "Shakespeare was once like this." Yes that is true, so was Socrates, so was Plato, So was St. Paul, so was

John Wesley, so was Abraham Lincoln, so was Jesus Christ. So also were John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, Machine-Gun Kelley and all the rest of that evil group that recently have blasted at the foundation of our civilization. But a creature of weakness, power and mystery is a baby.

"Where did you come from Baby dear?

Out of the everywhere into the here.

Where did you get your eyes so blue?

Out of the sky as I came through.

What makes your face like a soft, white rose?

I saw something fairer than anyone knows.

Whence that three-quartered smile of bliss?

The angels gave me this and a kiss.

And how did you come to us my dear?

God thought of you, and so I am here.

II.

Now since this baby is such a creature of power and of possibility, it's future is the biggest question of our day and of everyday. I know we are prone to forget this, and there are many pressing questions that confront us today. What about world peace? What of Japan and China? What of Germany and Italy? But the supreme question is the baby question. "How are we to train the lad? What is he to Be?" This question coming out of the long ago is still the freshest and most pressing.

1. It is the most important question for the child. That child may become a creature who in the very nature of things is doomed to wretchedness.

He may bring a curse upon himself as he brings a curse upon his generation. On the opposite, maybe through him he may enter into the feasts of the virtues of life as he helps to bring that feast to his fellows. As you hold your baby in your arms, the big question is this: What is he to become?

2. This is the biggest question for the parents. Your happiness, your joy, or your sorrow, all these are bound for the future of your child. If he goes wrong, if he wastes his substance with riotous living, there is nothing that can save those who love him from in some measure sharing in the wrecking of his poverty. My happiness, the happiness of my wife, is bound up in some measure with the well-being of our boys. The question of the future is of vital importance to ourselves.

3. Then the child question is the most important question to the church, to the community, and to the world at large. This is true because an army of invasion is marching upon our land. That army is going to take of every home, every place of business, every school, every college and university, every hospital, every seat in congress, it is going to take over literally everything. That army is made up of the children that are in our nursery today. The kind of world we are to have tomorrow depends absolutely on the kind of children that we have in our nurseries today. There are other questions, but the supreme question is the baby question.

III.

Now, is there an adequate and intelligent answer to the baby question? "How shall we train the lad? What is he to be? Why did these parents ask such a question in that distant day? They did so in the faith that there was an answer. They believed even then that the kind of man a child became was not a mere matter of chance. They believed that the law of sowing and reaping

operated not only in the vegetable kingdom, but in the animal kingdom as well. They believed that it operated not only among the lower orders of life, but among the highest. They believed that just as the man^{WR}sowed wheat, ~~he~~ reaped wheat, so also we reap what we sow in the heart of our boys and girls. When they asked therefore, "What is he to be?" They believed that the answer depended upon the kind of training that they gave the child.

Now with that view, the Bible is in hearty agreement throughout. The Old Testament fairly haunts us with the conviction that we can make of our children, within certain limits, what we will. "Train up a child in the way it should go and when it is old it will not depart from it." That truth, that declaration made in the abstract is illustrated again and again in the life of individual men and women. Samuel becomes the prophet of God. Not as a matter of chance, but as a matter of training. Absalom was a pathetic wreck, not because he was foredoomed to disaster, but for the lack of the right kind of training.

2. With this Biblical view, modern science is in hearty agreement. The psychologist adds his voice to that of the Scriptures in telling us that what a child becomes is a matter of training. By actual experience, it has been shown that a child can be taught to pet a snake and fear a rabbit, just as readily as the other way around. Our children believe what they are taught to believe. This teaching, of course, involving not only what we say, but what we are.

3. This view is also sanctioned by plain common-sense. During recent years there have been many intelligent and decent parents whose background was religious who have of set purpose given their children no religious training at all. In so doing, they have thought of themselves as being broad-minded. They excuse themselves from their natural responsibility by saying they were going to allow the child to reach his own conclusions. They were

not going to bias him one way or the other. They flattered themselves that they were being very reasonable and intelligent. But they were not. They were in reality throwing dust in the eyes of reason and spitting in the face of common-sense.

For instance, as broad-minded and sensible as such a position sounds, we do not take it with regard to any other matter except religion. You buy your child certain toys, but you select the toys. Why not be broad-minded and let the child select them. You know he would select a razor or a gun or a stick of dynamite just as readily as he would a toy dog. Why not give him equal liberty in selecting his food? He would probably eat toad-stools and rat poison just as readily as he would spinach and carrots. Why supervise his drink? Because, you know that left alone, he would take carbolic-acid or lysol just as readily as water and sweet milk. It is perfectly marvelous how utterly silly some sensible folks can be.

4. Now the verdict of the Bible the verdict of science can be endorsed and sanctioned by experience. Everyday we must realize that children are not only born, but they are made. Any nation can be made over in a single generation by training. A peace loving nation can be made war-like in a single generation. Witness the training of Germany before the World War. How is it that the Jew still remains the Jew? How is it the Catholic grows up to be a Catholic? It is a matter of training.

Perhaps tonight you are holding a baby boy in your arms, naturally if you love him and are in any degree thoughtful, you will ask earnestly this question that is so many centuries old. "What is he to be? If you believe your Bible, if you believe the scientists, if you believe in common-sense, if you believe in the advancement of the race, you have an answer. He is going to be what I and the others members of his home and the other members of his society make him. I can turn feet toward the depths if I choose. I do not even have to choose. I can turn them there by simply letting him alone. You

do not care to bias your child toward religion, then others will bias him toward irreligion, and that before he is ten years of age. Just as you can turn his feet toward the depths, so you can turn them toward the heights if you will. This being not theory, but fact. What are you going to do about it?

IV

Since this is the case, we are brought face to face with four facts with which every devoted parent ought to reckon.

1. A child can be a Christian. This is not true of some children, it is true of every child. It is true because the very characteristics that go to make a Christian are inherent in the life of every child. The God who made him put them there. Take faith, for instance, until by deceiving him, you teach him otherwise. A child is naturally humble. A child is naturally loyal to what it loves. It is our privilege to take this view in their humility, loyalty and love and direct them toward our Father in Heaven. Since we can make our children Christian, we ought to do so. It is at once our high privilege and our most weighty responsibility. There is nothing that can possibly mean as much to the future of your child as vital religion. There is nothing that he can take into life with him that will mean so much as the sense of the undergirding of the everlasting arm. We can so train our children, if we will, that they need never go astray. We can so train them that they will bloom into the conscious presence of the living Lord as naturally as the blooming flower.

2. Not only can a child become a Christian, but they can become a Christian easier than anyone else. Can a man be born anew when he is old? Yes, it is a possible experience, but it is rare. But such is not the case of a child. "Except you be converted and become as a little child, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." To be a Christian then, one must be

child-like. Therefore, I ask this question. When is it easier to be child-like-when you are a child or when you are fifty? I submit to you when you are a child, hence you can become a Christian easier as a child than any other time. Not only can a child be a Christian and be it easier than any other time. But those who become Christian as children make the best Christians. That is not surprising. It would be vastly easier if such were not the case. Who make the best scholars? Who make the best musicians? Who make the best athletes? Not those who begin at forty, but those who began as children. Some years ago I was holding a meeting in St. James Church, Montreal, when Saturday came a friend took me out to see some skiing. After I had watched for some thirty minutes, he said, "Dr. I have brought along a pair of skies, maybe you would like to try it." I looked at him in amazement "Brother" I said I have a family to support." What is the matter? I might have learned to ski if I had started in time, but my time is passed.

4. The final consideration that I press home to your hearts is this: Not only can a child be a Christian, not only can he become a Christian easier than at any other time, not only does he make the best Christian, but if he does not become a Christian as a child, the chances are overwhelming sure that he never will. I have been an evangelistic pastor throughout my ministry, but I have yet to see one single man or woman converted who had not been touched in some measure by religion in their young and tender years.

"How shall we train the lad?" What is he to be?" We are to train him as a Christian. Thus he can make the best member of the family, of the church, of society. That is overwhelmingly the greatest task that is before us. Frank Boreham in one of his charming essays tells of the Little Palace Beautiful in this way, he said there were four rooms, in each of the four rooms lay sleeping a little child. In the room that looked out to the north lay sleeping a child-that-never-was. This was a child that was longed for,

dreamed of, but never came. In the room toward the west lay sleeping the child that was. This was a little fellow that came and stayed just long enough to get our hearts into his chubby baby hands and then went away. In the room toward the south lay sleeping a child-that-is. He is the baby that romps in our nursery today. In the room that looks out upon the east lay sleeping the child that-is-to-be. Now, this wise writer says that we are to take all the love and care that we would have given to the child that never-was that we would give to the child that was. That we should like to give to the child that-is-to-be and focus them all upon the child that is. Everything depends upon him. "How shall we train the lad? What shall he be?" That is the biggest question in the world. We can only give the right answer. If we teach our children by what we say and by what we are to be vitally Christian.

THE SOILED FACE

"And it came to pass afterward that he loved a woman -----
whose name was Delilah." Judges 16:4

He loved a woman. What a fateful word that is. How much it holds of laughter and of tears, of triumph and tragedy, of heaven and of hell. He loved a woman. That has been a crowning beauty in some of the most victorious lives that our world has known. Here is a poet, Robert Browning by name. His genius came to fullness of flower because he loved a woman. Here is our own southern poet, Sidney Lanier. His life was a constant battle with disease but he was as musical as a sky lark and as radiant as the morning. One secret of his radiance was that he loved a woman that was worth loving.

But as the love of the right kind of woman is often the gateway to heaven, the love of the wrong is equally often an open road to hell. Some years ago, a tired and wretched man came to my office. "Have you been reading", he asked, "about those bank robberies in Oklahoma?" When I answered in the affirmative, he confessed "I am the guilty man. I robbed them every one." His explanation was that he loved a woman. A woman who make his life a hell.

I

It was through this love that Samson took his most fatal downward step. Samson had a genius for falling in love with the wrong kind of woman. He was a very intelligent man. He was far above the average of his day. Yet he was socially a bit of an idiot. Like some men and some women today, he was an utter nit-wit when he came to dealing with those of the opposite sex. In some

matters, Samson was wise. In love affairs, he was a constant fool. His idiocy is indicated nowhere more emphatically than that he fell in love with Delilah. What kind of a woman was Delilah?

1. Delilah was a foreign woman. She belonged to a nation that had been for years bitterly antagonistic with the nation of which Sampson was a part and of which he was a ruler. Generally speaking, it is not wise to fall in love with one of a different nationality. I know such marriages have been known to work beautifully. A Jew by the name of Boaz once married a foreign woman by the name of Ruth. These two gave to the world some notable grandchildren. David was one and Jesus Christ was another. But a happy marriage between those of different nationality is the exception rather than the rule.

2. Not only did Samson permit himself to fall in love with a woman of a different and hostile nationality but of a different and corrupt religion. Marriage is a very close relation. Religion is the most important something in our lives. At least, it should be. Sometimes Protestants of different denominations find it hard to get on. Catholic and Protestant, if both take their religion seriously, find it almost impossible. It is not wise to love in this fashion, a man or a woman of different nationality and religion.

3. Then Samson's love was unfortunate because of the character of Delilah. This woman ~~was~~ was already a creature of soiled face and soiled heart. She had already been fingered by too many hands. Perhaps she was from the beginning a woman of easy morals. Perhaps she had been conscientiously clean but had loved not wisely but too well. But judging her by the record, it would seem that she was naturally cheap in morals and color blind.

What is worse still, she had distributed her favors promiscuously because she was not really in love with anyone. In Delilah we see womanhood at its worst. She was in the truest sense a sensualist. That is she was willing to pay any

price in order to live at her ease in the realm of the senses. She belonged to the ancient order of gold diggers. She bartered herself over the soiled counters of her day for money. How tragic to fall in love with a woman like that.

II

Who was this Samson that permitted himself to play such a foolish part?

1. He was a man who should have known better - who did know better. He had had a beautiful religious upbringing. His father and mother had both been saintly beyond the ordinary. Samson was a child of promise. It was his high privilege to be surrounded from his infancy by an atmosphere that was beautifully religious.

2. These sincere and saintly parents had dedicated Sampson to God in his young and tender years. The vows that they made on their child's behalf came later on to be accepted by Sampson himself. In token of his vow of consecration, his hair was allowed to grow. An old Sunday-school question that used to be asked when I was a boy was, "Wherein did the secret of Samson's great strength lie?" The answer was, "In his hair". Of course, that was only partially true. The secret of his strength was in the vow of dedication that his uncut hair symbolized.

3. Being a man of deep consecration, Samson was possessed of a power to which he would otherwise have been a stranger. Dedication to God makes it possible for God to dedicate himself to us. The man who knows God is possessed of a power that he could not know otherwise. Sampson lived in a rude iron age. His strength was suited to his day. It was largely physical. He was credited with strength beyond human because God was with him.

4. He was a man who was braced by a sense of mission. The people of Israel at this time were constantly relapsing into paganism. Losing God, they

lost their freedom. When things became unbearable, they cried to God and God sent them a deliverer. Samson was one of the deliverer. He made a beginning but he did not follow through. However, he did enough to have his name recorded in the hall of fame in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. I would not have put him there but this writer did, however.

III

But along with these fine assets, Samson was possessed by certain dangerous liabilities:

1. First he was lacking in a moral earnestness. There was almost about him a dangerous degree of flippancy. From the beginning, he was a bit of a jokester. He loved pranks. Even when he set out to gain victory over his enemies, he often did it more as one who is practicing a joke than one who is really serious. Tying of foxes tails together and attaching the fire brand to turn them loos in his enemy's grain is a typical example.

Now this flippancy on the part of Samson was not born of the fact that he was full of laughter. From childhood he had been a sunny chap. That was the reason they named him Samson. It was not the fact that he could laugh that made moral earnestness impossible. Other things being equal, the more full of laugh we are the better service we are likely to render. Blessed is the man who has a sense of humor. But the trouble with Samson was that he did not know when to laugh and what to laugh at. Some folks have a warped sense of humor. I have known a few who would never crack a smile in the presence of what was really humorous but could fairly howl with laughter with something that was humiliating and cruel to somebody else. Blessed is the man that knows when to laugh. There is an old Dreyburg adage where Sir Walter Scott is buried ----- I noticed a latin inscription over one of the old monk cells. It read like this: "Sweeten bitter things with a bit of laughter." Samson could laugh but his laughter was not always the kind that sweetens.

2. Then along with this flippancy there went a certain cockiness that made for weakness and defeat. Samson came to be sure of himself. He ceased to feel any particular need of God. He was able to look out for number one. This is indicated by the careless way he was constantly exposing himself to moral danger. Every woman that he ever fell in love with was a foreign woman, hostile to him and his people.

His meeting with Delilah and his falling in love with her was the outcome of his flippancy and sureness of himself. Look at the story.

After judging Israel for twenty years, he decided to take a vacation. That was all to the good. It is just as religious to take a vacation when one is tired as it is to work. I have a good friend who was once as strong as an ox. He refused to take any kind of a vacation, giving as his reason the fact that the devil never takes a vacation. But he was not serving the devil, he was serving the Lord. Our Lord only preached for three years but during that brief ministry, he took frequent vacations. In taking a vacation, therefore, Samson was right.

But when he set out on his vacation, where did he go? He went not among his friends but among his enemies. He went to the place where he would be most exposed to danger. He was like the ministerial student at Harvard University who decided to experiment with himself in the slums of New York before entering the ministry. The experiment, so far as I know, has lasted to this day. He never came out. No man has a right to expose himself to a needless moral risk. Having gone among his enemies for his pleasure and his pastime, he dared to enter what he no doubt supposed to be a harmless flirtation with Delilah. Here he played with temptation, tossing it about as a juggler might toss a ball. He was strong. He did not have to go wrong. He could take it or leave it. But while Delilah played she was falling in love, Samson fell in love in sincerity.

Now Samson had a price on his head. These Philistines wanted to take him captive. That was their chance in Delilah. The woman was for sale. She set a

price and at once began to question her foolish and cocky lover about the secret of his power. Instead of sensing the danger and breaking off the foolish relationship, he flirted with it in his flippant and cock-sure fashion. At first he told her that if he were bound with seven bow strings he would become weak. But when Delilah put him to sleep and bound him with seven bow strings and shouted, "the Philistines be upon thee", he arose and snapped the strings as if they had been cobwebs and overcame his enemies. The next time he told her that if he were bound with seven ropes, it would work. But the result was the same.

Then as the woman played him, he came a little closer to his secret. He said, "If you weave my hair into the loom, I will become weak." But when this was done and his enemies tried to take him, he went out with parts of the loom hanging to his great head and defeated them. By this time, Samson had grown tired of being urged by Delilah. But Delilah had not grown tired of urging, so he told her his secret. She clipped the hair that was a symbol of his vowed dedication and once more she cried, "the Philistines be upon thee". Once more Samson roused himself "and said I will go out as at other times before and shake myself. But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

He loved a woman, the wrong kind of a woman. He loved a woman with a soiled face and a soiled soul. That was his tragedy.

"A fool there was and he made his prayer,
Even as you and I,
To, a rag and a bone and a hank of hair;
We call her a woman who did not care,
But the fool, he called her his lady fair,
Even as you and I.

"A fool there was and his goods he spent,
Even as you and I,
His honor and faith and his sure intent,
For a fool must follow his nature bent
Even as you and I.

.....
"Then the fool was stripped to his foolish hide,
Even as you and I;
Some of him lived but most of him died,
Even as you and I."

IV

What did this unfortunate love do for Samson?

1. It stripped him of his power because it robbed him of his Lord. This is as true for you and for me as it was for Samson. This does not mean that we have to go wrong where Samson went wrong. Your sin may be far more decent and respectable than his but the fact remains that to break with God is to break with the only power that can enable us either to become our best or to do our best.

2. This love of Delilah cost Sampson his vision. His enemies took him and put out his eyes. It is only as we live up to the best that we know that we come increasingly to see. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." But however clear may be your vision, that vision will fade into darkness if you refuse to live up to it. It is equally true that however dim may be your vision tonight, high but vague your sense of God, if you dare live up to the best you know, your night will change into day. Samson refused to see. Therefore, his eyes went out.

3. Finally as Samson claimed his freedom, as he asserted the right to do as he pleased, he became a slave. They bound him, the story says, with fetters of brass. That, too, is what is constantly happening. "Whosoever committeth sin," Jesus said, "is a slave." The first lie, according to the old Genesis story, that the devil ever told was his assertion that the road to freedom was the road of self-pleasing. It failed for Eve. - It failed for Samson. It has failed for every man and every nation that has tried it. To be independent of God is to dress your soul in chains. Samson set out to play with his enemies. His enemies ended in playing with him.

But while the story of Samson is tragic, while it is full of darkness, it is not entirely black. Even in the prison house, Samson's hair began to grow. That is, as he learned from his past failure, he began to recover his strength

until at last in an hour of self-giving, he is pictured as pulling down the temple of Dagon, the god of the Philistines. There was a great crowd in the temple. Delilah was perchance among them. This says the writer, "Samson slew more in his death than he slew in his life". This is not a Christian story but it does mean that after the greatest failure we can come back and after the greatest of defeats we can still win the victory if we dare to make a new start.

THE GOLD DIGGER

"Afterward Samson loved a woman
in the valley of Sorek, whose
name was Delilah." Judges 16-4

He loved a woman. What beautiful heavens and what hot hells
have been opened by that experience. Sometime such a love is the
gateway into the very best in life. I am thinking of one of
America's best poets. His life was a long battle with tuberculosis
but he found even this trying experience shot through with radiance
because of the devotion of the woman that he loved.

"In the heart of the hills ~~and~~ the life ~~of~~ know
Two springs that would unbroken flow
Forever bold and lucid streams
Into my soul's bright _____ of dreams.

Not larger than two eyes that lie
Beneath the many changing sky
And mirror all of life and time
Serene and dainty pantomime.

Our love _____ thine eyes and thy
May slip from out _____ gray
_____ those sweet _____ streams
That feed my soul for lack of dreams.

Oval thy _____ and passion pure
And gay thy _____ and honor sure
Soft as a dying violet's breath
Yet kindly, unafraid of death.

Throne-like two dove cotes of gray doves

and love for all thy God or man
in heart or nature _____ or plan
and love for God

He loved a woman. If for some, that is the roadway to heaven, for others it is the roadway to hell.

"A fool thou was and he made his prayer
Even as you and I.
To a ~~rag~~ ^{rag} of bones and a hank of hair
We call/~~the~~ ^{her} woman who did not care
But the fool he called her his lady fair
Even as you and I.

A fool thou was and his goods ~~he~~ ^{she} spent
Even as you and I.
His honor and faith and his full intent
For a fool must follow his natural bent
Egen as you and I.

And the fool was stripped to his foolish
hide
Even as you and I.
Some of him lived but the most of him died
Even as you and I."

This might serve as a suitable description for Delilah, with whom Samson fell in love.

I

What do we know about Deliah? She was a woman of an alien race and of an alien religion. Samson seems to have had a genius for falling in love with the wrong woman. He had more than one love affair, but never on ce did he choose a girl from among his own people. Such a course is usually a mistake.

This does not mean that foreigners are not as tood as we are. It only means that if a marriage is to be ^a success; those entering upon it need to have something in common. Those of different race and different religion seldom get on. Even when a Protestant marries a Catholic there is the gravest danger of failure.

2. Not only was Delilah of an alien race but she was a woman of a soiled past and of an unclean present. She was little better than an out-cast. How she had come to be the kind of woman she was we ~~do not know~~ are not told. It may be that she was more sinned against than sinning. It may

be that she had loved not too wisely but too well.

But as we read her story, we are driven to the conclusion that her unclean life was not born of deception on the part of someone who had deceived her. Nor was it born of a too passionate nature. It was born of her desire ^{for} /too easy money. She loved a soft life more than she loved character. In her relations with Samson she was, from beginning to end, a gold digger. She was one of those despicable characters who is willing to do anything for money.

II

Who was Samson? He was a man who had had a far better upbringing than Delilah. He was far less to be excused for doing and becoming ^{what} /he did do and become than was the partner in his shame. For a man of his day, he had had a great opportunity.

1. He was born of pious parents. He was a child of prayer. His birth had been divinely foretold. His consecrated father and mother asked ^{of} /the angel who foretold his birth this question, "How shall we train the child? What is he to become?" Further, since he had been given to them in answer to prayer, they dedicated him to God in his young and tender years.

This vow of dedication on the part of his parents came to be accepted by Samson himself. He took upon himself the vow of a Nazarite. A standard question that was asked in my Sunday School days was this, "What was the secret of Samson's great strength?" The answer was, "His uncut hair". Naturally as a boy I accepted this answer, though it made no sense at all. Of course, the strength of Samson was not in his hair. His strength was in that which his uncut hair signified - that was his vow of dedication. Through this vow of dedication he gave himself to God and God then gave himself to him.

2. Being a dedicated man, he knew the joy that always follows upon

dedication. Samson's name signifies sunniness. From his birth he was a joyous, happy child. Throughout his life, even in his serious acts, there is the touch of the jokester. When he burned up the enemies' fields of grain by tying the tails of foxes together and attaching a firebrand there- to, he was giving vent to his sense of humor. It is good to be able to laugh. One trouble with Samson's humor was that he did not always know just when and where to laugh. But he was a sunny man. That was one secret of his popularity.

3. Not only was he sunny but he was athletic. He was also courageous. His reckless daring in the presence of the enemy, his consistent victories over his foes, these added yet more to his popularity. I am sure that he was the most popular hero in his day. The athlete is popular even now, when we claim to test man's greatness by putting the measuring string around his head and heart instead of around his muscles. How immensely popular Samson must have been in that iron age where physical strength meant so much.

Here then was a man born of pious parents, a man who had been dedicated to God in his young and tender years, a man who had accepted the vow of dedication that his parents had made for him. As a result of his dedication to God, he was sunny, he was strong, he was a popular hero. He won victory after victory. The writer declares that he began to deliver Israel. He did not see the great task through as he might have done. He left the best part of his story unwritten because of the evil love of his life, but he made a fine beginning. He lived so heroically that his name is in the Hall of Fame (in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews) as one of the heroes of his day. It is true that I should not have accorded him a place there, but he is there nonetheless.

III

How did he come to involve himself in this evil love?

1. It would seem that he had grown a bit tired of being good. After judging Israel for twenty years he decided upon a vacation. That was all to the good. The most religious thing for a man to do when he is tired is to rest. For Samson to take a vacation after his strenuous years was sensible enough. But his mistake was in going to the wrong place for his vacation.

Where did he go? He went to Gaza. He went among those that were his enemies of his people and were his own enemies. It would seem as if he said to himself, "I have been decent long enough. I am going to get out and see how it seems to do something mean." We need not be shocked at such a feeling. It comes to almost all of us at some time of our life.

Now, when Samson set out for Gaza, he did not intend to fall in love. He did not intend to take up a permanent residence in that alien and hostile city. No man intends to go finally wrong. Samson intended to play with evil for a little while and then come back and be good. But so often in an effort to play with evil, evil turns tables and plays with us. That was what happened in the case of Samson.

No sooner had Samson fallen in love with Delilah than she began to search for the secret of his strength. She had already agreed upon the reward that she was to receive for betraying the man that loved her and that she pretended to love into the hands of his enemies. The conduct of Samson in the face of this is that of a man whose past victories had made him too conceited and self-sufficient for his own good. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" is a wise word. Samson had become too sure of himself. Jesus taught us to pray "Lead us not into temptation". Samson went out in search of temptation.

At first Samson treated the urgings of Delilah as a joke. When she asked how he might be bound so as to become as weak as any other man he answered, "If you tie me with seven green bowstrings, I will become weak."

Therefore, when Samson went to sleep, Delilah tied him as he had suggested. Then she rushed in saying, "Thine enemy be upon thee, Samson". At that, the sleeping giant arose and broke his fetters as if they had been cobwebs.

When Delilah continued to urge, this trifler edged a bit closer to the revealing of his secret. "If you weave my hair into the loom, I shall become weak", he told her. When he went to sleep, she wove his hair into the loom, but this proved as futile as the binding of the bowstrings.

Then Delilah told him that if he really loved her, he would tell her what was really in his heart. Then he told her that the secret of his strength was his vow of dedication; that, therefore, if she should cut off his hair - the mark of his vow - he would then be weak. When she had thus turned barber, she again came with the cry, "Thine enemies be upon thee". Once more Samson awakened from his sleep. Though he had broken his vow, of dedication, he was still not afraid. "I will go out", he declared, "as at other times and shake myself", But this time his shaking was in vain. "He wist not that the Lord had departed from him".

IV

What did this broken vow cost him?

1. It cost him his freedom. They took him and bound him with fetters of brass. Through the ages this devil's lie has lived, that the way to be free is to do as you please. Countless millions have sought freedom by breaking the law but freedom is never found except in conforming to the laws.

The other day I went down to the Southern Railway Station and saw a magnificent stream liner engine sitting upon the tracks. "You are a magnificent engine", I said to it, "you have an enormous capacity for speed and for power. You can romp on your way at the rate of sixty or seventy miles an hour and at the same time pull a huge string of cars. But there is one thing that amazes me, which makes me half-ashamed - you are so narrow. You

allow yourself to be confined to a little track less than five feet wide. Why don't you leave this track and claim your freedom?" The engine listened to me and the next day it decided to leave its narrow track and take out across the fields. What do you read in the papers after that experiment? It is not that a certain engine has become free: it is rather this - a great wreck on the Southern Railroad.

2. Not only did Samson lose his freedom but he lost his vision. "They put out his eyes." There is nothing that so blinds the eyes to a sense of God as unfaithfulness. I do not care how near God may be to you; if you are disobedient, the vision of his peace will utterly fade. It is only the pure in heart who see God and only they. This loyalty to the people you know has a way of blinding the eyes to God and to those values that are supreme.

Having lost his freedom and his vision, he became a slave in the land where he had once been a conquerer. His broken vow cost him everything.

V

This story belongs to the oldest book in the Bible. It is not a cheerful story yet it does not end in utter disaster. We read that while Samson was in prison his hair began to grow again; that, though he had failed so utterly, he turned once more to the God whom he had forgotten and disobeyed. As he did his old strength came back to him.

Then one night there was a great festival in the pagan temple. The select four hundred of that day were present. I daresay Delilah was there wearing one of the rare costumes that her betrayal of her lover had brought her. Samson was brought in to amuse the crowd. When they had admired his strength for a little time, he requested that he be allowed to lean upon the pillars that supported the temple. Then he prayed the grim and vengeful prayer. Having prayed, he bowed himself with all his might and brought

the temple down in ruin. Thus he slew more in his death than he had slain in his life.

It is not an ideal ending but it tells us ~~us~~ ~~athis~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~Christian~~ gospel: that even when we have broken our vows, lost our vision, lost our freedom, we can find our way back to him who always waits to forgive and forget.

HOW TO BE FREE

"Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."
Judges 21:25

I

In speaking to you on freedom, I am speaking on a question of the most tremendous importance. It is important:

1. Because freedom is absolutely essential if we are to make the most out of life. There is no great living without freedom. Of course freedom of which I speak is more than physical. It is a thing of the inner life. It is something that fetters and chains cannot take from us. It is also something which their absence cannot confer.

2. Then, freedom is important because it is the intense longing of every normal soul. We all desire to be free. It is a longing that is God-given. It begins to awaken within us quite early in life. The youth, in life's fresh morning, begins to dream of a good day when he can fling off the restraints of home and school and be free. This longing becomes more intense, if possible, as we get deeper into the years. It belongs to all peoples and to all ages. Countless battlefields have become red with blood in an effort to achieve it. It is a longing that is a badge of our greatness. When we lose it, something fine is gone out of us. When the Bastille was wrecked, we are told that there was a certain prisoner who did not wish to be free. When his door was broken down and the light burst in upon him, he put his hands over his eyes and shouted: "Get back; shut the door!" He had lived in the dark so long that he had come to love it. He had worn chains so long that they had ceased to gail him. But such a soul

is not an object of envy, but of pity. The best in him has died.

"I envy not in any mood,
The prisoner void of any rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer wood."

But, longing for freedom is natural to every normal soul.

But, in spite of this fact, multitudes of us are not free. It would be interesting to know how many of the mad and foolish and futile things we do are just an effort to break our bonds and be free. "Life is a jail," said one cynic, "to which we are sentenced for the crime of being born." So many feel that their days are spent in trying to ~~escape~~^{find} some sort of jail-delivery. Some of us are bound by one thing and some by another. There are those, for instance, who are the bond-slave of things. They are dependent upon certain luxuries for their happiness. They belong to their business as the fly belongs to the fly paper.

Then, there are those who are the slaves of convention. They dare not do their own thinking. They dare not dress their lives by their own mirrors. They are afraid of the crowd. They have to laugh when their fellows laugh, whether they are amused or not. They have to go the way of the crowd, whether it pleases them or not. They do not care to smoke, but their group smokes. Therefore, they must. Cocktails are not to their liking, but they dare not say so. They are the bondslaves of convention. Such a slave was Herod. He committed murder because he was a bondslave to the crowd. Then, there are those who are the slaves of their own homes. Their children, their husbands, their wives, are so many stones in the Bastille that

shuts them in. If you could only get rid of that pathetic old stick, your husband, then you would be free. If you could only fling away from that drab woman, your wife, you would be out of jail. Do we not have a mode of life that we call free love? Many are practicing it today. A certain movie actor who died in a drunken debauch tried it to the full. Yet I doubt if he were as free as Robert Browning who, through love, was the bonds slave of Elizabeth.

There are others still who are slaves to their religion. That is one of the most pathetic slaves of all. The eldest son was of that kind. When he told of his experience he said, "All these years do I serve thee." Weymouth's translation brings out the real meaning, "All these years do I slave for thee." That was what religion meant for him, mere slavery. There was no joy in it, no thrill in it, because there was no love in it. And that was what I feel it means to quite a few of you. Sometimes you would like to fling away from it all. And you sing:

"Ship me somewhere east of Suez,
Where the best is like the rest,
Where there aint no ten commandments,
And a man can raise a thirst."

Finally, there are those who are the slaves of their own appetites and passions. We know some of these. There used to be a young chap at Vanderbilt University who began to toy with the unclean. He buzzed about it, as a candlefly about a lighted lamp. He played with it as a kitten might play with a mouse. But by and by the thing with which he played began to play with him. From a gay, happy-go-lucky chap who was bent on having his fling and doing as he pleased, he became a miserable slave who would often turn to his debaucheries with

a face wet with tears. He had become the bondsman of his own passions.

But whatever form our slavery may take, whether to things or to self, whether to home or to religion, there is a way out. I am just as sure that I have a recipe for real freedom as that I am standing here at this moment. We cannot all be great, as the world terms greatness. We cannot all be rich in things, but we can all be free. There is one who is come to set at liberty those that are bound, and that one is present for that high purpose at this hour.

II

How shall we find freedom? There are two roads along which men are accustomed to seek it.

1. There is the road that is suggested by our text. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This text comes out of what is possibly the oldest book of the Bible. How did these people seek to be free? By casting off all restraints. Every man did as he pleased. There was a veritable orgy of personal liberty. This liberty was not enjoyed by the privileged, by the rich, by the gangsters, by the politicians simply, but it was enjoyed by all.

Not only did every man do as he pleased, but he did it in all human relationships. No commandment was binding. No obligation was compelling. This does not mean, of course, that every man broke every law. It does mean that every man broke every law that he desired to break. They simply cast restraint to the winds. They said, "Whatever is natural is right." They

went in for self-expression, as millions are doing today.

How did it work? The answer is entirely disappointing. In seeking to be absolutely free, they became divided within themselves. They became divided man from man, and tribe from tribe. The nations that should have made common cause for a common freedom fought among themselves till they were easily overcome by their enemies. They became a nation of slaves. Industry died. A brave man, ^{such as} ~~the~~ Gideon had to thresh his bit of wheat in a ^{care} ~~grave~~ in the night, and ~~highways~~ grew up, ^{since anarchy made them too dangerous for travellers,} Seeking freedom by casting off restraint, they simply dressed themselves in chains.

Now, this is what always happens. There is no single exception. Stomp your foot and shake your fist in the face of ^{say, I am going to do as I please} the universe, if you dare, and say: ~~"I am going to do as I please"~~, ^{But by so doing} and you won't find freedom, you will find slavery. If everybody who has found that true were to say "Amen" it would fairly shake the foundations of the world. Take Samson, for instance. Samson was gifted of God with a peculiar strength. For awhile he used that strength wisely. He judged Israel twenty years, ^{but at least} but he got tired of the prosaic task of obedience and sought his freedom through violation of law. He went down to Gaza and had his fling. But how did the story end? They bound him with fetters of ⁴ grass and set him to grinding in the prison house. In his search for freedom, he became a slave.

The same is true of the Prodigal Son. Why did the Prodigal leave home? Not to wreck himself, not to hurt his father. He left home to be free. He wanted to do as he pleased. He wanted to be independent toward his father. ~~But~~ this independence cost him

everything. It cost him his freedom. ^{It} ~~They~~ sent him into the field to feed hogs. In his break for liberty he found that he had welded galling shackles upon his wrists and ankles. That does not happen now and then, it happens every time.

This truth is being enacted before our eyes day by day in a fashion that it is next to impossible to ignore. Look, for instance, at those who set themselves to flout the laws, both of God and man. What was John Dillinger about? What are the Pretty Boy Floyds, and the Campbells, and the Carpis, and the Mother Barkers trying to do? They are trying to do as they please. They are going to be absolutely free. But it all ends with ~~the~~ binding ~~the~~ bars of ~~the~~ prison with the closer shut bars of death. And what happens in these coarser breaks for liberty happens in a more subtle way in our refined efforts at doing what we please.

One of the most brilliant young chaps that ever went through Vanderbilt University tried it out a few years ago. His father was a minister, and it was thought that he was going to follow in his father's footsteps. Before he was twenty-one, he preached in the leading churches of his city. But upon reaching his majority, he said, "I have been doing to please my father, now I am going to please myself." For awhile he had what seemed to be a free and brilliant career. But one night he wrote a letter telling how tired he was of his freedom, and that he longed to break his chains and bathe his weary soul in the ether of eternity. He then made a break for liberty by putting a gun to his temple and blowing his brains out. To search for freedom by flouting the law is to find slavery, not occasionally, but in every single instance from eternity to eternity.

Then, there is a second way to freedom. There is the path that is pointed out by Jesus, and by all the Prophets and Apostles. It is the path that God's care-free, happy children have walked through the centuries. It is a path of obedience. The path of disobedience leads to bondage, not once but every time. The path of obedience leads to liberty, not once but every time. There has never been a failure. There can never be a failure till God ^{falls} ~~flings~~ from His throne.

That obedience should bring freedom sounds a bit like a paradox. But we can see it work in every department of life. There is a great British vessel that will soon be reaching New York that has tramped across the Atlantic with vast commerce in its arms. It is a great free vessel. Why? Because it is obedient. Let it rebel against the little compass that it carries and it becomes a derelict and a death house.

Here is a great engine panting at the station. I cannot withhold my admiration. "What a giant you are!"; I say. "You can rush across the continent at the rate of sixty miles an hour, pulling a train of cars after you." But there is that which causes me to withhold my admiration, you are too narrow. You are shut in to a little track not more than four and a half feet wide." And next day that engine asserts its freedom, takes out across the fields. But it does not find a larger liberty. It only finds its grave.

Now, what is true of the ship and of the engine is true of the universe. Nothing is free except as it obeys the laws of its being. The bird is free so long as it remains in its native element. When it undertakes to become a fish, it

loses its freedom. The fish is free so long as it remains in the water. Let it undertake a stroll on the sand bar and its freedom is over. The airship is free just as long as it is obedient. When it rebels it becomes a wreck. Man is free, free to become and to do his best when he surrenders to God. When he rebels, he becomes a slave.

III

So, we are here tonight in quest of freedom. Two roads are open to us. The road of self-will - a road that in every instance has ended in disappointment and tragedy. It is the road of surrender, a road that in every instance has led to freedom and joy. What a joyous soul was Jesus!-- the freest, gladdest man that ever lived! What is his secret? "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that hath sent me." Here is another man. He has suffered the loss of all things. He has spent a good part of his life in various Roman jails, but he is the freest and the greatest of men. What is his secret? He fairly haunts us with it - He is the bondsman of Jesus Christ. To have no problems, to have as much business at one end of town as at the other, or the one part of the world as the other, is to be wretched. To be loaded with obligations, to say, "I owe, and I ought, and I must," is to be free.

Some of us are in prison now. But there is a way of escape. You can escape out through the skylight into the fellowship of God. You can escape out through the door into the fellowship and service of your fellows. For surrender brings freedom because it brings love. And to be

the bondsman of love is to be the freest man in the world. That freedom is for every one of us. It comes to us at the hands of our gracious Lord. He is saying to us even now, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Put your life in his hands, and you will go forth from this place God's joyous, care-free, liberated, happy child.

Sin binds slowly - wasp
 what was wrong with Priest End Levite? slave to
 self, needed to break out to sufferer
 Pity to see a strong man blame to a
 woman once that: