Paul's letter to Titus is of universal interest but it has a special word to say to the minister. As the letter indicates, this young man Titus, Paul's own son in the Gospel, is engaged in missionary work on the island of Crete. Things are not running smoothly at all. He has no impressive statistics to send to his father in the Gospel. In fact, it seems he has little to report but failure in yesterday and today. Therefore, there is little to expect but failure tomorrow.

Now, because his situation is so impossible, he sees nothing to do but to hurry away to greener pastures. Every minister has that feeling over and over. Many a time we are sure we could give a good account of ourselves if we were in any place except where we are. That feeling seems to belong to some of the lower orders of life as well as to ourselves. I drove along a concrete pavement some time ago. As I drove, I saw a cow down on both knees with her head thrust through a fence, nibbling at the sparse grass that grew along the edge of the pavement. I do not know how many acres of luscious grass were behind her, but she was saying to herself, "I may not be giving any milk now but if I were only out of this place and over there, I would give at least ten gallons a day."

Now, when Paul replied to this letter he agreed with his young friend in one particular. In a comforting manner he seems to say, that your situation is hard, that your parish members are difficult to do anything with. You are guilty of gross understatement. They are all but impossible lot. Even one of their own poets has declared that they are all of them liars and lazy gluttons. You know that you are in a hard situation but that situation is even harder than you think.

Then he adds this same word. "The fact that your situation is so hard,
the fact that these Cretons are such a sorry lot is your supreme reason for being there. I left you there to set in order the things that are wrong. It is your business to go where there is need and not where you are not needed. If everything in Crete was just as it ought to be, I would not have sent you there under the guidance of God in the first place. The very desperation of the situation is the reason that you were there.

Years ago when I was a teacher, I decided with my brother to build a public library. Our plan was very simple. We proposed to bring in certain distinguished men to lecture. We were to charge admission fee and with that money we were to purchase the required books. As our first lecturer we invited our old teacher, a great man and a popular, Sawney Webb. We rented the Opera House for this great occasion.

Now, when we went out to greet this audience that we estimated might be around fifteen hundred, we found it nearer to fifteen. It was thoroughly humiliating. It even aroused our indignation. We expressed our feelings to our old teacher in no uncertain terms. I remember yet his wise and gentle rebuke. "My son," he said, "if everybody was just as public spirited and interested in the building up of the community as they ought to be, the Lord wouldn't need you and me. Because they are not is our reason for being here."

When Paul had pointed out this face, he next indicated to this young minister how he was to carry on. He believed that young Titus could through the grace of God change this parched situation. He believed that he could change bit of human desert into a garden, this bit of waste into wealth. But if this is to be possible, he reminds the young preacher that he must compel a certain response from those who hear him. If he can compel that response he is on the road to victory. If he fails, he is likely to find little but defeat.
What is this response that the preacher is to compel? There are many responses that every minister would like to receive from his hearers. These responses were received in some measure but not in full measure. But there is one response that we as ministers can all compel and that from everybody. What is that?

To begin negatively, we cannot command everybody's approval. If you set out to please every member of your congregation, you are doomed to disappointment. However hard you try, however agreeable you seek to be, there are some that are not going to approve of you. It was a kind of revelation to me as a young minister that as faultless as I was there were some raspy souls who did not agree with everything that I did. There were even some that did not think I was the prince of preachers. I really found it hard to forgive them. Of course, I still like those who approve better yet but I can get along with the others after a fashion.

This is the case in part because I have come to realize that nobody has a universal appeal. However poor you may be as a preacher, there are some who will think you good. However good you are, there are some who will think you poor. There was a congregation that howled Paul down before he had finished his sermon. There was another congregation that dwindled from one thousand to twelve. They simply did not care for the sermon he was preaching them on the bread of life. Therefore, they walked out.

There are those that will walk out on us, if not literally and figuratively, they will walk out mentally. When I am desperately tired, there is one dream that I have dreamed over and over again. I am up preaching to a crowded house. Then the crowd begins to vanish. They slip away by twos and
threes and ten's and scores, until I am alone speaking to empty paws. I have never had that to happen literally. Neither has it ever happened, so far as I know, that everybody approved.

Just as you cannot compel everybody to approve of you and of what you do, no more can you win everybody to your way of thinking. That was another shocking discovery that I was some years in making. I was so right on every question and so sure of my own rightness, I did not see how any man of ordinary intelligence could fail to see matters as I saw them. I knew exactly what ought to be done about the amusement question, the liquor question, the economic situation and the rest. I knew the answers to the theological questions. I had exactly the right view of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Then, something very upsetting happened. I discovered people who did not agree with me on all these important matters. Furthermore I had to confess that they were not the wicked rebels that I naturally thought they would be. I had to confess that they were just as earnest and consecrated as the young minister. Then I began to comfort myself by saying that it is possible for one to be very off in one's opinions and right in his heart at the same time. Of course, by being off in his opinion, I meant those unfortunate souls that do not see everything just as I see it.

Since then I have tried to win folks to my way of thinking, especially in matters that strike me as important, but if they refuse to agree with me, we if I find that they do not think exactly alike, I exercise forbearance, I tolerate them. Then we go on our way together realizing that when two people do think exactly alike, it means that one of them is not thinking at all.

If it is not my purpose as a minister to win everybody's approval and to win everybody to my way of thinking, no more is it my purpose to win everybody's friendship. Of course, I ought to go as far as possible in that direction. This is the case because it is very difficult for me to help any
man who does not like me. Every minister ought to be popular so far as he can without compromising in that popularity his end in itself. It is a means to an end. But other things being equal, I can help his congregation more if I am held in high favor by the congregation.

This does not mean that popularity is an end in itself. It does not mean that it cannot be purchased at too great a price. Jesus called attention to that fact. "Woe unto you," he declared, "when all men speak well of you." Now, that does not mean that you are to go about deliberately stroking for the wrong way and stirring up all the antagonism you can. It does not mean that a porcupine is of necessity more attractive than a Maltese cat. It rather means that if you are on as good terms with the bootleggers and gamblers and economic gougers as you are with the saints, there is something wrong with you.

It is not, therefore, our purpose to win everybody's friendship. Though, I repeat, we should go as far in that direction as we decently can. I confess that I could go further than I have gone. I have missed something by not doing so. Had I learned more fully to put myself in the place of my hearers, to sit in his seat, to bleed through his wounds, I could have rendered a larger service. Yet, however friendly you are, there are some who will not respond to your friendship. In proof of this I need only mention the fact that the most friendly man that ever lived died on the cross.

What, then, I repeat, is this response that we must compel and what we can compel? Paul mentioned it in the second chapter, fifteenth verse of this letter, in its final sentence: "Let no man despise thee." Or to put it this way, "See to it that you command the respect of those to whom you preach." This respect you can always compel. People may say of us, "I think he is narrow, fanatical. I think his voice is harsh. I think some of his sermons are shocking. I don't like him." But they will add, when they are deeply earnest, "I do respect him. He is the kind of man that compels my respect." That is a respect that is
worth having. We can love a man without respecting him, but we are not likely to be greatly influenced by him, but if we genuinely respect him, he will influence us even when we can say little else in his favor.

III

Now, what are the qualities in a minister that compel respect? I am aware that here we come to a question where there might be considerable diversity of opinion. In enumerating the qualities that I think essential, remember that this is just one man's opinion. If you can compile a better list, you are surely at liberty to do so. What, then, I repeat, are the qualities that go far to compel respect?

1. If I am to win your respect, I must begin by respecting myself. I must respect myself both as a man and as a minister. In fact, if I cannot respect myself as a man, I am not likely to respect myself as a minister. Whenever any preacher gets to be more preacher than he is man, three strikes have already been called on him. Therefore, if I expect to win the respect of others, I myself must be undergirded with strong self-respect.

This, of course, does not mean that I am to swagger, it does not mean that I am to be like that young rooster who thought the sun rose every morning just to hear him crow. Such high self-respect is inconsistent with profound humility. Jesus was the very embodiment of humility. His meekness and lowliness was the one virtue in himself to which he calls our attention. Yet his humility did not mean that he thought meanly of himself. Though poor in spirit he was the furthest possible from being poor spirited.

When one night he took a towel and girded himself, he played the part of a slave. Yet when he did that, he was not thinking of himself as a slave. Listen how grandly he thought of himself. "Jesus, knowing that he was come from God and knowing that he was going to God at the very moment when he was most conscious of his kingly origin and of his kingly
destiny." Then he stooped to do this lowly task. It is the minister's privilege to go about his task girded with the knowledge of his self respect.

Now, if we are to have any real right to respect ourselves, we must earn it. We must earn it by what we are and do. I am thinking here especially of what we do. Ours is a high and exacting task. One essential, if we are really to respect ourselves, is this; that we respect ourselves as one of the world's workers. No drab idler can possibly have any great respect for himself, father.

Listen to these words of our Lord: "My faith worketh even into now and I work." In the old fashioned Sunday School they used to teach that work was sent on us as a curse. Even so, I thought it considerably worse. But work is one of life's supreme blessings. It is a safeguard against temptation. It is a great healer of hurt hearts. It is the roadway to self respect. "I work," declared Jesus, with a kind of holy swagger. That is a word that every minister must be able to utter or he will be wanting in self respect.

Now, among the many demons that dog the steps of the minister from the time he is licensed to preach until he superannuates, there are few that are more dangerous than the demon of laziness. We do not have to punch clocks at set ours. There are few people to check up on just what we do. Nobody sets the exact time when we are to begin the preparation of our sermon and when the sermon is to be finished. Therefore, it is easy to procrastinate, easy to do the easiest thing first and the hard the last. It is easy to become guilty of the plain old garden variety sin of laziness.

The preacher is a man of many tasks. As I shall have occasion to emphasize elsewhere, his supreme task is preaching. That, if he is God's called man, is what he was sent to do. It is his supreme business. Yet many of us major on something else. I think this is the case because preaching is far in ahead the hardest thing that we have to do.

Some time ago a friend of mine who was a fairly successful minister
but could have been far more successful, invited me to lunch. In the
course of our conversation he put this question, "When do you begin
preparing your sermons?" "When do you?" I replied. "I try to get
around to mine by Friday morning," he said. What he had been doing the
other four days was not mentioned.

"Well," I replied, "I differ from you in this. If I do not have
mine finished by Friday noon, I will not preach it. I break ponies
sometimes, but I do not break them before the congregation." I start in
early because I never know when I can prepare a sermon. There are times
when the "wheels of the chariot drive heavily." There are other times when
they simply will not drive at all. Therefore, I never run the risk of
putting mine off."

It was my purpose in my younger years to be a teacher. I have,
therefore, been privileged to sit in the pew quite a bit. Strange to say, al-
though I have been preaching now for forty-one years, I have never come to
feel like a minister. I still look at preaching from the layman's point
of view. Were I sitting in the pew, I could forgive myself of many a task
but I could not forgive myself for coming before the congregation
Sunday after Sunday without preparation, even shoddy preparation. Every
self-respecting minister must be a worker. I think he ought to put his
emphasis on the particular work that he is called to do, that of preaching.

2. A second essential quality if you are to command the respect
of others is courage. Whatever other virtues you have, if those who
listen to us are convinced that we are cowardly, that we haven't the
courage of our convictions, then they cannot respect us. Courage is
one quality that is universally admired. It is admired by the savage and
the civilized, by the Occidental and the Oriental, It is admired by
the educated and the illiterate. It is admired by the old and the young.
Here I am not speaking so much about physical courage, though that is of some importance, but that type of courage we share along with some of the lower orders of life, the bull dog, for instance. I am talking about moral courage, that is the courage to do the thing that you are desperately afraid to do because you know you ought to do it. It is said that on the eve of battle, a young officer noticed that the knees of General Andrew Jackson were having a fit of trembles.

He dared to call the General's attention to it. "General," he said, "your knees are shaking." "Yes," came the response, "and if they knew where I was going to take them in the next hour, they would shake more than that." There are times when the minister has to take a stand, has to speak the truth that he is afraid to speak. He is afraid because he is sure that it will wound or offend somebody for whom he cares and whom he is very eager to please.

Years ago in a city where I was the pastor, a certain evangelist was conducting a meeting. He was being sponsored by a local pastor who was both greatly hated and loved. This evangelist was a mud slinger of the worst type. One day a gentleman met him on the street and bloodied his nose and the evangelist ran like a cur. The local pastor proceeded at the next service to challenge everybody to fight him any time, any place, with any weapons. They were both desperately wrong. But I thought the man who ran was the most contemptible of the two.

In urging the necessity of courage I am the furthest possible from insisting that you go out to shock people and make enemies as possible. I am urging simply to speak the truth as God gives you to see the truth. I am urging you also to have the courage not to say what your congregation might be eager for you to say if you yourself do not believe it. The great prophets of the Old Testament differed widely in temperament and ability but this quality they had to a superlative degree — they were men of dauntless courage.
3. A third essential if we are to compel the respect of our hearers is sincerity. People may admire us for our cleverness, for our scholarship, for our all round ability. But no amount of gifts, however abundant, can win the respect of our hearers if they do not believe in our sincerity. What is it to be sincere?

Scholars differ as to the derivation of the word. There are those who declare that it originaged from the two words sine cara. When the ancients used to mine marble, if they found a defective piece, they could doctor it with wax and make it look perfect, but when this marble was exposed to winds and rains and sun the wax fell away and it was discovered to be defective.

This happened so much that those who sold marble began to give this guarantee - this marble is sine cara, without wax. It is sincere. It is just exactly what it looks to be and what we claim it to be. Sincerity is the spring out of which flow the streams of truthfulness, honesty and simplicity.

Now, I suppose you agree with me that there is no group of men any more subtly tempted to insincerity than the minister. He can be insincere in such a good cause. He feels that he must tell little white lies in order to spare the feelings of his parishioners. I remember a temptation that came to me when the wife of one of my official board asked me if I approved of women smoking. We fear to offend people by differing from them. Therefore, we often nod approval when inwardly we condemn. We laugh when we are not amused.

Then we soon realize how profitable it is to compliment folks. I have heard ministers that I thought ran this to extremes. They were constantly tossing bonbons. Not only so, but they sopped them in honey. I reached the conclusion that they so exaggerated the case that they did them more harm than good. But I have been driven to the conclusion that no compliment is
too exaggerated if it is directed towards me. Of course, I know that the old boy is given to exaggeration when he says those things to the other fellow, but in my particular case, for once he is telling the truth.

Now, appreciation is a good and wholesome thing. When I realize how much more smoothly the machinery of life would run if it were oiled more frequently, with the fine lubricant of appreciation, I wonder that I cannot use it more. Yet this can be overdone and it is easy for the minister to say far more than he believes. Not only so, but he excuses himself for it because he has such a good motive. In fact, he is seeking to win the one whom he compliments.

But this temptation to insincerity perhaps reaches its extreme degree in the stories we tell. I was preaching many years ago to the Virginia conference. The church was large and dimly lighted. As I was going back to my hotel a gentleman intercepted me and began the conversation by saying, "That was a splendid sermon the minister preached." Since he had made such a good beginning, I did not disclose my identity. "I have heard him do better," I replied. My fishing was not in vain. I caught another. He added, "He is a good story teller."

Then came a fly that took a nose dive into the ointment. "He is a good story teller," he said, "but I wonder if those stories he told were true." "Well," I replied, "I see your point. It is terribly easy for the preacher in the thrill of his enthusiasm to do a bit of pious lying. But I happen to know the man and I know that these stories were in the main true.

If there is temptation to exaggerate in telling our stories, that is bad enough, but to tell what happened to us as what happened to somebody else is a form of sin of which we ought to be ashamed. Years ago I went to hear a man who has since had to quit the ministry and membership of the
church. He told a magnificent story. Everybody about me wept. I am sure I should have joined them in their tears had I not known that he was not telling the truth. I had just read the story before coming to church. It was no great surprise to me that he so deteriorated in character that he finally rotted down.

If you are to be perfectly sincere my advise is, "Do not tell how many you have in your congregation." There are two things that no honest man ought to do for his own peace of mind. He ought never to weigh a fish or to count surprise a congregation. It is sure to be both of them.

Now, sincerity is a virtue without which the minister simply cannot compel the respect of his hearers. If he has everything else but misses that, he is out. If he has that and little more, he can still be vastly helpful. Let me remind you once more of the wise words of David Hume. He was accustomed whenever he returned to his old home, to hear his mother's pastor preach. When the wits accused him of turning religious because of this, he replied, "I do not go to hear him preach because I believe what he says, I go because he believes it."

4. If the minister is to command respect he must go about his task somewhat in the spirit of self-giving. He must be a brotherly man. He must not be constantly asking, "What am I going to get out of it and where do I come in?" but "Where can I help?" Now, it is easy for a minister to become that ugly type of character, a "gimme" personality. From the very first day that the young preacher declares his intention of entering the ministry, favors begin to be turned his way. He comes to be a man of special privileges. Some are big and strong enough to stand that; others are not. These are, I thank God, a very small minority. But woe unto the preacher who is forever demanding special privileges.

Most of us, thank God, have never felt that the world was brought into our debt because God honored us by calling us into the ministry. I deserve no...
more honor for preaching than my friend who does for being a lawyer, a doctor or a merchant, if he has entered his task in the will of God. Therefore, I ask no privilege for myself that I am not willing to give to others.

But this must go infinitely further than merely refusing to accept special privileges. It must go to self-giving. There is that in the man who loves with a love that seeketh not its own that compels respect. Any man who is willing to lay down his life for his friend brings our souls to their knees whether he is cultured or uncultured, whether he lived in the first century or lives in the twentieth.

5. Finally, if the preacher is to command respect, he must be a good man. That sums up all that has gone before. Good is a word that has fallen on evil days. It has, in the minds of some, a decided anemic sound. Yet the best that we can say about any man is just that "he was good". It is even the best we can say about God. When other characteristics fail, genuine Christlike goodness will compel our respect.

Be proud of your call — demand the twenty-first attitude.
VISITING THE CITY

I Thessalonians 2:1

"For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain." Weymouth gives a better translation of this text: "For, you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you did not fail of its purpose." Had you been at a certain gate in the city of Thessalonica at the right time some nineteen centuries ago you would have seen a Jew entering the city accompanied by two friends. This man does not walk with the brisk step of youth. He is getting up in years. Then he is hampered further by the fact that his body is still sore from the terrible scourging that he has recently suffered in the city of Philippi.

But here he is, a visitor to the great city of Thessalonica. Why is he here? He is not here by accident. He is not here as a mere matter of chance. He is here with a definite purpose. And what is that purpose? The text says he did not fail of his purpose. But what was the purpose that he succeeded in carrying out? Why did he visit the city any way?

He is not in this city merely as a sightseer. There is nothing wrong in sightseeing, but this is not Paul's business. He is not here primarily for the driving of a trade or the winning of a fortune. Paul worked at a trade while he was here. He was a tent maker, and doubtless he toiled at his task with his usual diligence. But tent making was not his main purpose. The only reason he made tents at all was to help him in carrying out the supreme purpose of his visit.

Paul is here as a crusader. He is here in the interest of the kingdom of God. He is here as a distributor of the divine wealth. Poor himself in the things of this world he has come to this city with its idolatry, with its wickedness and its wretchedness to make many rich. He is here on business for his King. No vagrant is he. No pious tramp wandering wherever chance or inclination leads. He is an earnest and purposeful campaigner, fighting under the banner of Jesus Christ our Lord.

What a pity it is that all of us in the city to-day are not dominated by this same high purpose. What a tragedy that this is not the supreme ambition especially of every member of the church. But a great many of us are little more than spiritual vagrants. We are pious tramps. We say as a man said to me some time ago: "I have been tied down to a little church. I am going to visit around now." And so you become sermon tasters. You go to one church to hear a man preach and to another church to hear somebody sing. You accept no responsibility. You anchor yourself to no task. You become a kind of religious tramp for the simple reason that your purpose is not, first of all to please God, but to please yourself.

Paul was in the city on the King's business. Paul was in the truest sense of the word a Christian. And what did this saint of God do? I tell you. The very first Sunday he was in the city he went to Church. He did this not because a committee had waited on him and invited him. I wish more folks would do such work. An acquaintance of mine told me that while he was stopping at a hotel in one of our Western cities a man came in during the breakfast hour and sat down and talked to him, then walked over ahead of him and paid his bill, then invited him to Church. And as they went on together he asked the giver of the invitation if anybody else was doing that sort of work. And he said that there were eight hundred men from his Church who were on the streets of the city at that hour. Paul went to Church in spite of the fact that he had no invitation.
He went to Church in spite of the fact that the Church was not a very live institution. It was not a Church of any great spiritual power. He knew that it was far from being what it ought to be. But instead of staying away and criticizing it, instead of standing off and throwing rocks at it, he said, "Though it is not what it ought to be I will go. Maybe by my going I can help to bring it to fill the place that it ought to fill." He went to Church though the Church was a very poor and drab affair spiritually.

He went to Church and identified himself with its work in spite of the fact that he did not intend to make Thessalonica his permanent home. Surely that is remarkable. That indicates that Paul was a genuine saint indeed.

"Paul, come out to Church to-day. We want you to tell your experience. You know a story that we do not know. You have come into possession of a blessing that we do not possess. Come out and help us." And Paul said, "I would be glad to, but you know I am not going to stay here but a few weeks. I live over at Tarsus. I would bring my letter here and unite with you and help you wage your battle against sin in this wicked city, but I am here for only a short time. Therefore I will keep my letter in my trunk and go to the movies."

But Paul went to Church. He not only went to Church, but he went eagerly to work. Paul believed in the might of God. Paul never doubted that the Gospel was "the power of God unto salvation." But he realized that it was God's purpose to bring that Gospel to the world through men. He knew that if God ever got access to the world He must have men and women like ourselves through whom to work; He must walk on His mission on human feet; He must minister through human hands; He must speak through human lips.

So Paul went to work. He is not ashamed to call attention to the fact that he toiled night and day. Yet this is the duty of every man and of every woman in God's world. You are not excused because you do not belong to the Church. The only difference between you and the man who does belong is that he has accepted his obligation and you have not accepted yours. God expects every one of us to help. God is calling for workers. "Pray you", He said, "the Lord of the Harvest, that He may thrust forth laborers into His vineyard."

Notice the word "laborers"; people who would lift at the load; people who are not afraid to bend their backs under heavy burdens; people who are not afraid to give themselves sacrificially to toil. We have enough triflers. We have enough drones. We have enough who are at ease in Zion. May the Lord grant unto us more men and women who will work, more men and women who make an actual earnest business out of the task of living for Christ.

Not only did Paul work, but he worked courageously. He made no secret of the new doctrine that he had come to preach. He made no effort to conceal the new and wonderful story that he had to tell. It took great courage for him to do that. He knew that some would become angry. He knew that many would oppose. The wounds that he had received in preaching the Gospel were not yet healed. And it is very evident that it was exceedingly hard for Paul to fling himself in this strange city at once into the task of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. The temptation was to be silent. But he said: "We were bold, through Christ, to preach, notwithstanding the past and notwithstanding the fact of present opposition."

We need that boldness to-day. We are so timid in our Christian work.
We are so fearful. And our cowardice is contagious. Our fears lay their chilling and weakening hands upon others. But courage is also contagious. One man who flings himself boldly and whole-heartedly into the task of winning the world is a tremendous help in enlisting others. May the Lord deliver us from the bondage of our fears and put into our hearts a holy boldness.

Then Paul worked lovingly. The tenderness of him as we see it in this letter is something amazingly and irresistibly beautiful. He had not undertaken to drive these heathenish people into the kingdom of God. He declares that he was gentle with them, as a mother who nurses her own child; that he cheered and encouraged and implored them as a father might cheer and encourage and implore his own children. He declares that in his eager yearning to win them he was willing not only to give them the Gospel, but if necessary to give them his life.

No wonder he soon made a place among them. No wonder that they gathered about him and listened to his message. When a lover comes among us we gather about him as bees gather about a honeysuckle in springtime. For there is nothing for which we so hunger as love.

"Do you know the world is dying, for a little bit of love? Everywhere we hear the crying for a little bit of love; For the love that rights a wrong, fills the heart with hope and song. They have waited, oh so long, for a little bit of love."

It is possible to work without love, but we do not work very effectively. But the one that goes forth armed with love will never go in vain. Paul was tender as a mother. Not that he did not have some harsh and jarring truth to tell. He knew that these people were sinners and he did not hesitate to tell them so. But he did it so tenderly, he did it with such a yearning, breaking heart that instead of being hardened by it their own hearts were broken.

And it is my experience that love never antagonizes, even when it seems harsh. Some of the best friends I ever had as a school teacher were among the boys that I had to punish. There was a preacher some years ago who wanted to go back to a certain charge. He had a petition signed for his return. It was signed under circumstances that did not do the preacher honor. He presented it to one of our most saintly Bishops, one who is dead now. And the Bishop knew the circumstances under which the petition had been obtained. He had to say some words to the preacher that seemed hard and harsh. But he said them with the big brotherly tears running down his face. And the preacher didn't get angry. He couldn't. Paul worked with a yearning tenderness. May God grant such tenderness to us. For there is nothing that you need and nothing that I need more.

Then Paul worked in the power of the Holy Ghost. "The message", he declares; "came not to you in word only, but in the power that the Holy Spirit supplies." Oh, isn't the tragedy of all tragedies today just this, that so often our message, our testimony is little more than mere words. There is no fire in them, no grip, no warm and vital glow. There is nothing in them to make men cry out"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Our speech is very correct, oftentimes very polished, but mere words. There is no mysterious power about them that is able to shake the sleeping into wide awakeness. There is no dynamite in them that is able to work moral revolutions in the hearts of our hearers.
Let us face the fact, Sunday school teachers, Christian workers, preachers. We can not do our work without the Holy Spirit. The task is far and ahead too difficult. We are here to work transformations in individuals, in communities, in the world. We are here to change the leopard's spots and the skin of the Ethiopian and to transform the world's moral graveyards into parade grounds for the standing army of the King. To do that we must have power. Power alone belongs to God. He has promised that power to us. "I will give you a mouth and a wisdom that men shall not be able to gainsay nor to resist." This way victory lies. All other paths lead to defeat, for "apart from me you can do nothing."

Finally Paul lived his own message. That was a great sermon that Noah preached. It was a physical sermon that took shape before men's eyes. Day by day it grew into an ark. But that sermon would have been an utter failure but for the one fact, that Noah entered into the ark himself. He not only built a sermon, but he lived in it.

So Paul lived the Gospel that he preached. He dares to remind these people of Thessalonica that his own life among them was holy and without blame. And after all here is the supreme element of power. The world may imitate in some measure all the virtues of Christianity except this one virtue of holiness. There is no other religion, there is no other power except the power of Christ that can make men truly good. People can explain our talents, our abilities as teachers, as preachers, as musicians, but they can not explain a holy life except in terms of the Lord God Almighty.

If you then want to make a contribution to this world that is of supreme value, if you want to present this world a gift that is worth more than genius, if you want to make it a gift that is worth more than all of our abilities poured into one, if you want to make a contribution that has a value beyond that of coffers of jewels and mountains of gold, give to the world the enriching benediction of a holy life. That is within the reach of every one of us. And all other contributions that we can make to human well being are as dust and ashes in comparison with it. (Is Christ real?)

Now what was the outcome of Paul's visit to this city? It was not his home, remember. He was there temporarily, just as you are in Washington temporarily. And yet what a difference his visit made in the city. He had not been there a day before folks began to find out that he was a Christian. He had not been there but a very few days before lives were remade by him. People began to hear his story and to believe it and to pass out of darkness into light and out of death into life.

Not that all of them believed, but it was hard to be in that city and not realize that a live, vigorous Christian had come to town. Soon there was such a stir in that Jewish synagogue that that great sleeping mass of heathenism began to get awake and to rub its eyes. The tide ran so high that the enemy began to bestir itself and to put on its armor for battle. Oh, there is no loss in opposition. There is less when we become so stupid and so cowardly and so wanting in passion and fire and zeal that we are not worth opposing.

Paul had not been in the city two months till it was impossible for you to get on the street without men asking you about this new and strange story that was being told, this wonderful Gospel that was being preached. The man of the street was talking about it. It was a theme of conversation
among the high society of the city. Government officials were talking. The Jews who were loyal to the old faith decided that something definite and drastic must be done. The fire had spread beyond their power to control. They had to appeal to the authorities.

And what a compliment there is in that appeal. Listen: "They that have turned the world upside down have come here also." And mark you, when they said that they were not talking the language of hyperbole. They were but stating a sober fact. This man with his fellows was working a moral revolution. He was turning the world wrong side up and putting it right. The old Greek philosopher said that if you would give him a place whereon to stand he could lift the world. He only needed a place to rest his fulcrum. And God only needs a man on whom He can depend absolutely to turn the world upside down.

The authorities acted and Paul was driven out of the city. But before he left a vigorous Church had been born. A multitude of men and women who had been till recently strangers to Christ were now rejoicing in the possession of His friendship and fellowship. Where this man had farmed a harvest had grown. Where he had toiled a beneficial change had been wrought. His visit to the city had been a visit of victory. He left legacy of spiritual wealth behind him, that of making heaven richer to this day.

Not only did his visit result in victory in that a new Church was brought into being, but this Church became a new basis of operation in the enemies country. Its members, redeemed by the Gospel of Christ, became preachers of the Gospel. Through them Paul declares the message had been sounded forth to all parts of Greece and Macedonia. The harvest that he had planted in the city was bringing forth thirty, sixty and a hundred fold outside the city. We can never tell the value to God of one single soul. That woman out in Indiana who induced J. Wilbur Chapman to accept Jesus Christ little knew that she was putting her hands upon the shoulders of thousands.

Last of all Paul greatly increased his own joy. When he was driven away from these new converts he sorrowed for them. He agonized daily and nightly. He tells us that when he could endure no longer he sent Timothy to find out how they were getting on. He was so afraid that in the midst of sever persecutions they would lose their faith and falter and fail. He was breaking his heart over them. And happy is the man who is able to thus suffer. Such agony was worth more than all the selfish and indifferent ease that this world has ever known.

At last Timothy came back and he brought a favorable report. They were being persecuted, but they were also remaining true. And Paul declared that "Life is now life indeed, since you stand fast in the Lord." These converts then were his very life. He calls them his joy. No mother ever joyed more over her children than he joyed over them. He declares that they are to be his crown in that day in which he shall stand in the presence of the King; their greeting to him on the other side is going to help make heaven heaven for him. So through this visit he enriched the city, he enriched himself and he enriched his eternity. (The general and the salvationist.)
BE INDEPENDENT

"Be dependent upon nobody." I Thess. 4:12 (KJV)

The man who thus calls us to independence has a right to a hearing. It would be hard to find a more independent personality either in the Bible or out of it. Paul was independent of circumstances. He loved victory, but he could face up to failure. Often knocked down, he was never knocked out. He had by nature a hot and restless heart, and an ambition to proclaim his message to the most distant people, but he could remain for long months within prison without prisoner. He deeply appreciated a gift sent by the congregation at Philippi, but he feels honor bound to tell them that such a gift was not necessary; from the church at Corinth he refused to accept a penny. He was proud of his toil worn hands, they were a badge of his independence.

Then he was independent in his faith. He had a gospel all his own. From the hour of his conversion he was able to stand alone. He was not dependent upon the other apostles, even the greatest of them. His gospel had come to him as a direct revelation from God.

He was also independent in his thinking. He refused to proclaim Christianity as an improved Judaism. He did not call his Gentile converts to obey the Jewish law. When he presented his case to the chief of the apostles he gave their approval. But in spite of this approval Simon Peter a little later broke down under pressure. Stranger still, even great-hearted Barnabas did the same. But not Paul. He held his ground and gave these two distinguished saints a
public rebuke. This man, therefore, who calls us to reindependence possessed that virtue to the superlative degree.

"Be dependent upon nobody". That is surely an appealing word.

1. This is the case because everybody admires independence. We admire it even when we do not possess it or when its possession on the part of another may seem in our way.

Sometimes ago I saw a mother leading a little chimp who was just learning to walk. He did not like to be led, so he snatched loose and went on his own. He had just gone far before he fell flat. But instead of laying down waiting for his mother to pick him up, he was up and gone before she could reach him. Then down he went again. This happened a third and a fourth time. At last he came to the only muddy place in the road. Snatching his clean dress and his clean face and even his mother's temper. "Too, what are you going to do now", she shouted indignantly. With a grin on his muddy little face the chimp answered, "I am going to get up!". At that I felt like giving a loud cheer. To our independence.

We admire independence in the social circle, even though we may disapprove. While strolling at a ball in a certain city I noticed a very pretty girl in a group that I admired. The partition was thin, I could not but hear what was going on. The pressure they brought upon this girl was terrific. It last they threatened her with the "shaming insult" that if she did not drink she was a sissy.

Well that was too much. She felt compelled to convince her
companions she was not a lady. This she did not by accepting their
invitation to drink, or did it by turning loose upon them
some most unsavoury language. I had heard a few swearers in my by
who were quite fluent, but I do not recall any who surpassed her.
Frankly, I do not approve of swearing, but when I listened to this
girl and when I saw the sulphur smoke curling up under the door,
I could not but applaud her independence. 

Who recognizes the fact that, above all else, he has such right to his
convictions as his neighbor to his lack of convictions.

We admire independence in political life. We may take with a
grain of salt the declaration of a statesman of a long time yesterday!
"I'd rather be right than president". There are those who feel
that his past performance did not quite measure up to this fine
statement. But the fact remains, we stand up and cheer in our souls in the
presence of the man who can put principle above the party, who will
rather lose with honor than to win with dishonor.

Then we not only admire, but demand such independence on the
part of those who lead us in the church, whether minister or layman.
It is perfectly right for a minister to desire to fill the best possible
position for which he is equipped. But when any sort of position
becomes a necessity that is likely to prove fatal. When the minister
has to preach to please any group or individual the metallic creeps
into his voice and he ceases to be a prophet. We all admire the men
who dares to speak the truth as he sees it.

Not only do we all admire independence, but we in some measure
seek to possess it. That is true of all peoples, even the most backward. Our generation has witnessed a new demand for independence. The nation that fails to face this fact is simply waging a futile fight against the inevitable.

Curs is a day when the man who works with his hands is bent on being independent. All the independence was once in the hands of management. How each is trying to be independent of the other in their struggle for independence both management and are squandering many millions a year to say nothing of the price paid in stomach ulcers and headaches. 

Even in the home there is a widespread desire for independence. Husbands and wives often seek to be independent of each other, with the result that one of them visits Reno. Fathers and mothers seek to be independent of their children and children seek to be independent of parents.

Then as individuals we want to live our own lives and be totally independent of each other. In a book of a generation ago, there was a young man who was making money rapidly. "What is your ambition" a wise friend asked. "I want to become a millionaire," was the reply. "by a millionaire" his friend questioned. "So I can tell the other fellow to go to Hell," was the answer. That answer is not as it sounds. The young man meant simply that he wanted to have a million so that he would not have to depend upon anybody.

But while all aspire and many seek independence, in the strictest sense, nobody achieves it. In spite of the fact that Paul
said "Be dependent upon nobody" he was quite well aware that we are in fact dependent upon everybody. Beyond the others writers of the New Testament he emphasizes this fact. We can all see clearly that we are mutually dependent. "Glory to God in the highest!"

For instance, there was never a day when so many people were praying and working and longing for peace as today. Yet we have to face the fact that no nation can achieve this high goal alone. It is a matter of cooperation between nations.

Management and labor each longs to be independent of the other, but they never can. Management is dependent and labor upon management. Therefore for them to be at each others throat is as sad as for the catcher and pitcher on a baseball team to fall out and seek to knife each other. It could end by both losing the gain.

We can not be independent of each other in the home. In spite of the fact that I felt like giving a loud cheer when the small boy snatched loose from his mother and went out on his own, I realize that if he pushes that independence too far he is likely to break his mothers heart and work his own ruin. The plain truth is that we are bound up in a bundle of life with each other. Therefore, that helps one helps the other and that hurts one hurts the other.

There was a time when we thought we could build certain groups aside. We could fling them into slums and leave them to rot alone. But we have discovered that they do not rot alone, we rot with them. You cannot separate yourself from your fellows then you can duck your own shadow.
Some time ago while fishing, I got some poison ivy on my left ankle. Poison ivy has a way of arousing attention. When this particular case began to act up, I remembered how I used to treat it as a boy. So I hurried to the drug store and bought a small bottle of carbolic acid. But I forgot one item of this treatment, that was that I used to dilute the acid. At this time I took mine straight, I rubbed it on and I rubbed it in.

Believe me, it got action. Then it had eaten down close to the bone, every member of my body rose in angry protest. Not only so, but every member was an isolationist. This hand said "I will have nothing to do with it". My head said "I certainly will not. I was not consulted when the stuff was put on". Every other member of my body was going to let that whole stay in its own juice. But in spite of that firm resolution, when we went to bed that night we all lay awake together. You see, that it sounds as if we were dependent upon nobody, when we are dependent upon everybody. Complete independence is complete dependence.

III

What then does Paul mean? While absolute independence has not been reached, independence at its best is within reach and ought to be claimed by everybody. It is a part of our God-given inheritance. It is included in that command, "Have dominion". Of course, dominion is impossible without some sort of independence.

Where then shall we begin. We must remember that the desired independence is fundamentally a religious question. The first step toward it is the acknowledging and accepting of our utter dependence
with his face toward his fields. He left word that he would be
watching his slaves even from the grave! But his threats did not
make them work harder, not less so.

Here is a man called Livingston. He died in darkest Africa
500 miles from the sea. But the black men who were with him so
loved him that in spite of savage animals and more savage men they
carried his body through the jungle to deliver it to his friends.
His dominion was a dominion of subjection, the dominion of a man who
for Christ sake had made himself their servant.

Who are the really independent souls? Generally speaking, they
are the ones who have come most completely to depend upon God. Relying
upon him these become dependent as did Saul of circumstances. They
become independent of things. Some time ago I was asked to write an
article on the greatest Christian I have known. I have not been able
to write the article yet, but I have at least selected my man. This
was a tenant farmer in Texas. One day I met him and asked him
about his crops. We were in the midst of a terrible drought. "I am
not going to make a thing", he told me cheerfully. "I am so sorry",
I replied in sober truth. But if he shared my sorrow he did not show
it.

"You know what I said as I looked at my burned crop and realized I
was not going to make a thing", I said. Lord, I thought you were going
to take care of me this year through this crop. "Evidently you have
some other plan." How independent he was.

If then, we are to be independent God is surely a fundamental
part of the answer. By accepting Him we do not work out every detail
but we begin to face in the right direction. If I really trust God
upon God. We find it not by the path of rebellion, but the path of obedience.

For instance, when this command "Have dominion" was given, man's mastery over nature was slight indeed. Today we is exercising a dominion in the realm of the visible beyond the wildest dreams of the most daring of a few years ago. How have we won this mastery? We won it by finding the way God was going in the physical world and going with him. What we know about electricity has been learned by obeying the laws of electricity. We have won in the realm of the visible through obedience.

If we win in the realm of the spiritual it must be by traveling the same road of obedience. All our woes, fundamentally from our rebellion against God, we have sought to be independent of God. When the prodigal left home he was not seeking to wreck himself or to wound his father. He was only seeking to be independent. He was in quest of a worthy objective, but he traveled the wrong road, the road of disobedience. He grew in the end and bore disappointment and disaster.

Now given obedience to God, utter dependence upon him and we set our feet upon the road of finding independence everywhere else. We cannot permanently win over our fellows by violence. The only dominion that is abiding is the dominion of mutual submission. Paul stated it in these words "Be in sejection one to another out of affection to Christ".

Years ago driving through a beautiful valley a gentleman pointed out a tomb on the side of a mountain. "There", he said "is buried the body of a man who was a slave owner. He was both a miser and a tyrant. When he died he had himself buried in a standing position
I will seek to pull my part of the load. I will recognize that I am a debtor, I will make an honest effort to put into life more than I take out of it. Then I will feel my true worth.

If I really put God first, all other values that the world has to offer will become secondary. Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." Thus depending upon God, he stood before Pilate and made the governor look like a pigmy. While he was eager to let him go, but somebody shouted from the crowd "If thou let this man go thou are not Caesar's friend." Pilate depended upon Caesar and went out into the night. Jesus depended upon God and was independent of all else going into the presence of his father at last declaring "I have overcome the world." If you want independence that is real, seek first the kingdom of God and all the independence that really matters will be added unto you.

But when we look for independence at its best, we do not find it in Caesar, but in God's Master. How did Jesus become a man of independence? How is the ambition for independence to be established. What is the reason that Jesus was not anything at all to Caesar, but he thought. How did Jesus become independent? And I want to conclude by the prayer of the apostle Paul: "Neither I seek nor do I desire to be esteemed. But to do my work, which I have been called for, and which is my true vocation, I do that willingly. The God who commanded me before Pilate, the God that Pilate shamed, the God that Pilate said was not worthy of death, he has honored His name and His work. So Jesus was not ashamed of Caesar.
GIVE THANKS

In everything give thanks.

I Thessalonians 5:18

I.

This is a big order. "In everything give thanks." In the midst of things that make for joy and the things that make for sorrow. In the midst of the things that build us up and the things that threaten to wreck us, give thanks. But while this is a big order we must not make it bigger than it really is. Notice carefully what the Apostle says. He does not say "for everything give thanks." "In everything give thanks." It takes a good deal of grace and thoughtfulness to do that much.

But while Paul does not say "for everything give thanks" those who really believe in God can come more nearly doing this than most of us think. In so saying, I am not claiming for a moment that everything happens for the best. There are tragedies taking place these days on a wider scale than we have seen for years. There are national tragedies, group tragedies, and individual tragedies. We are not going to claim for a moment that we are to be thankful without discrimination for all of these. There are some of them that are depressing, disappointing, heartbreaking beyond all words.

Yet, when we come to look back upon our own lives it is surprising how thankful we are for certain experiences that we thought when we were passing through them were going to work our ruin. Some of our darkest days have
turned out to be our brightest. Some things that we thought were going to impoverish us have brought us wealth beyond our dreams. We are thankful for our joys, but we are equally thankful for our sorrows. And to you who are passing through trying experiences even now I can say that if you live within the will of God you will come to thank him even for these. Our tragedies often help us quite as much as our triumphs, Therefore, Paul declares that on sunny days he is thankful and on cloudy days as well.

"It isn't raining rain to me
It is raining daffodils,
In every dimple drop I see
Wild flowers upon the hills.

A cloud of gray engulfs the day
And overwhelms the town
It isn't raining rain to me
It is raining roses down.

It isn't raining rain to me
It is raining clover blooms
Where every buccaneering bee
Can find a bed and room.

So a health to him who is happy
And a fig to him who frets
rain
It isn't raining to me
It is raining violets."

And mark you this text is more than a bit of advice, it is that but it is a positive command. When Paul says "In everything give thanks" he is laying upon us a solid obligation. By this he means that whether we are thankful or
not is up to ourselves. Many a man flatters himself that his ingratitude is due to ugly circumstances. Business has been bad. His health has failed, his home life is in a turmoil. All these things may war against gratitude, but none of them can defeat it. Gratitude is an inward grace. We can be thankful regardless of circumstances. Therefore, Paul lays upon us this same command, "In everything give thanks."

II.

But how is this possible? This is an important question. Everybody, if they would consider the matter, would like to be grateful. But some of us deceive ourselves by telling ourselves that such is impossible. But it is not. It is possible for every man and woman here, for every child or youth, for everyone listening in to be genuinely grateful today and tomorrow, and till the sunset comes. That is a goal that is worth striving for. Like all other goals, it does require effort. How may you and I learn in everything to give thanks.

1. The first suggestion that I have to offer is that you cultivate the habit of looking at what you have instead of what you have missed. It is easy for us to do this to a certain extent. Perchance there is a little baby in your home, may be your next door neighbor has a baby that is quite as beautiful as yours—if such a thing is possible. But you never think of coveting that baby. You are satisfied with your own. You are so absorbed in the winsome little life that has been entrusted to you that it makes you, in a sense, forgetful of others. Some wives are foolish enough to be satisfied with their own husband, and some husbands with their own wives.

But some never learn this high lesson. I was driving along the highway some months ago when I saw a very human performance being put on by a cow. This dumb creature was in a lovely pasture. But she had forgotten all the rolling acres of
green that were behind her. She had no eye for that nor any appreciation. Instead, she was down on her knees with her head run through the fence nibbling at a bit of grass that grew in the soil beside the pavement.

I daresay there have been a few that have understood human nature better than Aesop. You remember his story of the dog who had been forging. This dog had been very successful. He is now on his way home with a fine piece of meat in his mouth. It so happened that the road led over a beautiful river. During his passage he looked down into the depth of the clear, blue water and saw a dog very much like himself. But the piece of meat that that dog had was a wonder. It was so much better than his own that he thought he was an utter failure. He thought life would not be worth living unless he possessed the meat of the other dog, so he sprang in the water head first, lost his own piece of meat, and went home snarling and ungrateful because he was so busy looking at what was not his that he lost what was his very own.

There are so many people who cannot enjoy the good things of life because somebody else has something that they feel is better than their very own. Their Ford was a delight till their neighbor bought a Dodge. When I used to feed the pigs as a boy I have seen one foolish pig grab an ear of corn and run away to eat it all by himself. And I have seen a yet more foolish pig turn his back on a hundred ears of corn to chase the idiot who had run away. Not only so, but I have heard him cry pitifully. His very tone of voice said "Woe is me for I am undone." He left enough corn behind him to last him a week to run after one single ear. If you ever learn to give thanks, you must look at what you have instead of what you have not.

2. If we expect to obey this command we must quit taking things for granted. How easy it is to kill our gratitude by taking life's everyday blessings as a matter of course. For instance, we live in an ordered universe. We live where we are quite sure that what we sow we reap. When we sow wheat, we need never have a sickening fear that when the harvest comes that wheat may
be tares. We live in a world where every winter changes to spring, and every summer into autumn days of harvest. But too often we take these things for granted.

(1) Did you ever hear of that day when the sun failed to rise? Six o'clock came. It was time for day, but night still lingered. There was no golden glow in the west. There were no glamorous shafts of light upon the hills. There was darkness everywhere. Noon came, but it was as black as midnight. Evening came, but there was no sunset because there had been no sunrise. Everybody was in terror. By and by the long night wore through and ten million of anxious eyes were turned toward the east hoping for the return of day. Then the sky began to turn gray and then golden. And the sun looked up beyond the hills and the world shook with a sound of sheer joy and gratitude. Why? Not so much because the dawning of a new day, but because the day failed to dawn once. We need to thank God for our ordered world.

(2) We take our nation for granted. If there was ever a day when we ought to thank God upon our knees that we are Americans it is this day. We are still, to a great extent, a free people. That, I take it, is our supreme privilege as Americans. We are so used to being free that sometimes we forget to be thankful for this unspeakable blessing. And believe me! I am afraid of anything that in any degree lessens our freedom. Ours is a day that has much to say of Social Security. I am in favor of this unless it comes at too great a price. But whenever the day comes when the government provides me my meat and bread that same government must tell me when and where to work. We want no security at the price freedom. I am thanking God today that I was privileged to be born in America.

(3) Then too often we take the Church for granted. Suppose a decree was passed tomorrow by some irresistible power that would close every church door forever. Suppose you knew that today was the only day you could ever gather with your brothers of a common faith to worship the God of your fathers? How the
churches would be thronged and how many hearts would be broken. But because the doors of the church are always open. Because it is always offering us its gracious ministries we sometimes fail to appreciate it.

But as for me, I am thanking God today for His Church. It is my spiritual mother as it is yours. We were dedicated, you and I, at its altars in our young and tender years. When loves sweet morning had its dawn it consecrated that love with the sacrament of marriage. When sickness came it ministered to our pain. When death came, it shared our sorrows and made us sure that this corruptible must put on uncorruptible and this mortal must put on immortality. As a lover of the Church, I am thanking God for it this morning.

(4) Then we often take our friends, even our dearest loved ones for granted. When you waked this morning, you were in an atmosphere of kindness and tenderest love. I wonder did you take it as a matter of course? Or were you thankful for it? Sometimes we have to have our hearts broken before we ever discover how much we appreciate the common-place prosaic men and women whose tender thoughtfulness make our lives worth the living.

(5) Sometimes we even take the gift of life itself as a matter of course. Let me remind you again of a conversation I had with my nephew years ago. His mother had evidently been instructing him on the uncertainty of life. Her teaching had made some impression. He was sharing his wisdom with me. "Uncle" he said, "when we go to bed at night we do not know whether we will live till morning or not, do we?" "No" I answered. "We might even die in the night while we are asleep," he continued. "Yes" I agreed. He said, "I am so used to getting up without being dead that I do not intend to die." Thus he took life as a matter of course. Not bad for a child, but too bad for grown up children. If we are going to be grateful we must take neither God nor our friends for granted.

3. If we are to be grateful we must cultivate a fine spirit of humility. There is no more deadly foe of thanksgiving than plane conceit. Humble folks find
it easy to say thank you. But not so with the conceited. Did you ever notice how prone we are to take the credit for everything that is good in ourselves and to pass the blame that is bad to somebody else? If we happen to be handsome and intelligent, nobody is to blame for that but ourselves. But if we are cranky and cross-grained and hard to look at we inherited that from some miserable ancestor.

It is to be hoped that many of us will observe "thanksgiving" this season. It is to be hoped that we will make the habit of giving thanks through the whole year. But there is one chap that will never attend any thanksgiving service. That is the self-made man. The Pharasee whose story Jesus told takes the gracious word of thanksgiving upon his lips, but there is no thanksgiving in his heart. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men." He has a good eye on himself, a bad eye on his brother, and no eye on the Lord at all. He has nobody to thank but himself. The same is true of the rich fool. He looks out upon the field, grain fields, over-filled barns, his employers have been faithful. God has given rain and sunshine in the right proportion. The farmer himself has been blessed with good health, but he has nobody to thank but himself.

God save us from the conceit that blasts our gratitude. What have any of us to be conceited over? "What have you" asked Paul, "that you have not received." The answer is, simply nothing at all. If you are alive, your life is a gift. The books you read are a gift. The air you breath is a gift. The sunshine that warms you is a gift. There is nothing that is absolutely your very own but your sin. To be conceited, therefore, is to be at once silly and ungrateful. If we are going to be thankful we must give diligence to the cultivating, to the driving out of conceit, and the bringing into our hearts ever fine grace of humility.

4. The final direction I give to be grateful is to express your gratitude. The only way to keep your faith alive is to act upon it. The only way to keep
your eyes alive is to see with them. If I desire to go blind it is not necessary
to have my eyes put out. All I need to do is to bandage my eyes a few months and
I shall be a blind as a mole. If I desire to lose my hearing, I need not drive
a spike through my head. All I need to do is to stuff my ears with wool for a
few months and I shall be as deaf as a post. If I wish to lose all gratitude out
of my heart, all I need to do is stubbornly to refuse ever to express my gratitude
to either God or man.

III.

But what is the good of gratitude? Why should we wish to keep it alive?

1. Gratitude greatly enriches the possessor. A thankless man is mighty
apt to be a joyless man. Those that are most grateful are equally the most joy-
ful.

Then gratitude is a mark of moral and spiritual growth. We do not expect
gratitude from small babies. But when these babies grow up unless they learn
gratitude they are apt to teach us "how sharper than a serpents tooth it is to have
a thankless child." They wound us, not simply by what they do to ourselves. They
wound us even more by forcing us to realize they are dwarf-souls, pathetic spiritual
infants that never would grow up. To be grateful is to be joyous. It is also to
show yourself to have attained some bit of spiritual material.

2. Then we ought to give thanks because gratitude is so helpful to others.

I think too few of us realize how much more smoothly things would run if it were
oiled a little more frequently with the fine lubricant of gratitude. Ingratitude
tends to freeze us like a bleak north wind. It withers us like a burning drouth.
But the icicles fall and the desert changes to a garden under the warmth and bap-
tism of gratitude.
"Give Thanks"

Of course we realize this, but too few of us act upon it. We say, "He knows I am grateful. She knows I appreciate it." Maybe she does, but even so she would like to hear you say it. But too often we keep our words of appreciation locked up in our hearts till death comes. And then we spill them out into ears that do not hear anymore. So it was as splendid old Thomas Carlyle, who lived with Jane for more than half a century. But she has gone now and what a lonesome place she has left against the sky. "O, if I had her back," he cried pitifully, "O, if I only had her back for five minutes to tell her all through the years that I loved her." But she is gone "where the hail storms and fair showers do not reach, and where the wayfarer at last lays down his load."

You and I need to express our gratitude.

3. Then we ought to give thanks because it brings joy to our Lord. He is that much like ourselves and we are that much like Him. One day Jesus healed the ten lepers. Nine of them when they saw they were healed, hurried on their ways. But one high-souled chap turned back and said, "I can't go home till I thank the man that put me on the road to recovery how much I appreciate his thoughtfulness." And that man brought unmeasured gladness to the heart of Jesus. So may we. Therefore, I close with this wise word "In everything give thanks."