A LIFE FULL OF HOPE

Here is an Easter word from the lips of one who had witnessed the crucifixion: "Thank God... we men have been born again to a life full of hope, through Christ rising again from the dead." (I Peter 1:3)

For Simon and his friends this tragedy on Calvary had meant the death of hope. Therefore, when he said to his friends "I'm going fishing," he was not merely asserting that he was going for a day of rest and recreation. He was rather putting a black period to his years of a dead yesterday. From a life of hope he was turning back to one full of despair.

As this death on the cross left Simon without hope, so it did for his fellow disciples. There is no doubting the deep devotion of Thomas to his Lord, but after having seen that Lord crucified, his hope, still in utter despair that when his friends came from that little service in the upper room, declaring that they had seen the risen Lord, instead of being gladdened by such announcement it half angered. "I don't believe it," he seems to say indignant. "Nothing can make me believe it. You say you have seen him, it will take more than that to convince me." I must put my finger in the marks of the nails and place my hand in his side." Yet even this brutal doubter came to share with Simon a life full of hope.

Now whatever is deep in our faith we can all agree that a life full of hope is elixir that none but the wise seek. It strikes me that our earthly days are peculiarly short of this treasure. There are earnest and serious people who feel justified in looking upon our present world scene with eyes full of gloom. The scars of two world wars, the tormenting
Then there are those who seem to glory in their glooms. They belong to a cult of despair. Many of our modern-day writers of drama and fiction belong to this class. Their pages are as barren of heroes as the arctic ice-cap of roses. Big Daddy in a "A Cat On a Hot Tin Roof" is about as near the heroic as any of them seem to climb. And Big Daddy is big only in his girth and his egotism. Neither he nor one of his fellows is worth knowing. (They have no more appreciation of the unseen and eternal than a fishing worm.)

Hope is more than a luxury, it is a necessity. It is a treasure to its possessor. It is such a wortful treasure that nothing really arrives without it. I was guest in a home of writers and where my host is said to be worth sixty millions of dollars. He showed me over his palace. He took me riding in his wonderful car. But when we returned and I was assisting my hostess from the car, she gripped my hands in both hers and burst in tears, saying "Pardon me for giving way like this, I am so miserable". She was a bit short on hope.

On the other hand however, empty your hands may be, however many times may have been sprung from your clinging fingers you if you still have hope you are rich. We only do best if you can a house of

Then hope is a treasure for those who need you helpful to those with whom you have to live. There are wet blanket personalities who can see the brightest day. They are as skillful as pick-pockets in stealing even our expectancy. This is the case because despair is contagious. It is contagious to hope. I am thinking of a friend whose coming into any group is like the turning on of a new light. Knowing he lived a life full of hope, the gleam of hope to others,
Part II

This hope found upon the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus was unspeakably rich in its content. The realization of their risen Lord transfigured all life. These men who had seen life fall into ruins about them were both remade and recommissioned by the vision of their risen Lord. He said to them once more "as a father has sent me, so I sent you." They went out to their impossible task with the certainty that their risen saviour was among them as a fellowship, that he was with them individually, that he was their ever present friend. He was also within them, giving them power both the will and to do according to his good pleasure. It was this joyful awareness of an ever present Lord that made them irresistible.

It was because they knew him that they "outlived, outfought and outdied those of that pagan world."

This assurance of a risen saviour gave them not only a sense of personal victory but it made them sure of the final victory of good over evil, of God over the powers of darkness. Had Jesus failed to rise at all despair would have been inevitable. If Incarnate Goodness could be defeated, even utterly destroyed, then what hope could there be for the best of us? But the resurrection is a guarantee that the final victory is not with night but with light. Thus they shouted "Hallelujah!" with Paul "The victory is ours, thank God."

This assurance of the presence of the risen and living Christ also made them sure of eternal life. This new life that had come to them was more than eternal existence. It was eternal right existence. Merely to continue to live might have in it more of hell than of heaven. Did not Emmanuel, "that Emmanuel, that life become mine, that death came to do me no harm, that death this ransom brings, where run somewhere safe to dwell?"
But eternal life that comes from knowing God through Christ means a 
bit of heaven here and a fuller heaven beyond death.

Part III

Now the very heart of the Easter message is this. This life full of 
hope is also within our reach. If you remind me that it is not easy 
to be hopeful today, I will remind you that a life full of hope was 
not easy for these saints of the long ago. Their master was 
crucified without the slightest opposition on the part of a single 
individual who counted. Even after the resurrection the little hand-
full of saints seemed as helpless as straws in the grip of a hurricane. 
"He killed James the brother of John with the sword." How easy that 
was. It was as easy as it was for me as I was walking just now to 
clip off the top of a weed with my cane. No voice of authority was raised 
in protest. Yet these dauntless souls girded by their awareness of 
Christ went on to conquer that ancient world. It is not theory but 
fact that they did the absolutely the impossible in a way that was 
just as black as ours, and changed it into morning. This is 
--- a changing fact.

Now if we too are to share their life full of hope we must share 
their awareness of their risen Lord. I rejoice in the evidences we 
have of the resurrection of Jesus. As a historic fact, it seems to 
me to have about as solid proof as any fact of yesterday. But proofs 
and evidences are not enough. The assurance that makes sure is this--- 
"They knew him." "Jesus came and stood among them." It is only this 
personal knowledge that can change Easter from a mere date to a life-
giving experience. To miss knowing him is to miss all that is worthwhile. 
To know him is to realize by the highest.
How may this knowledge be ours? How did Thomas, with eyes totally blinded by despair, come to see Jesus? He vowed with bitterness that nothing could convince him. But doubler that he was, he was honest enough to give himself advantage of the doubt. "You affirm," he said to his friends, "that Jesus came to your last meeting, I don't believe it. But I am going to give myself a chance to know the facts. The next time you meet I am going to be there." Thus facing in the direction of the light the best he know he came to say "My Lord and My God".

Here is another who reached reality "I know whom I have believed and persuaded who is able to that he is able to keep that what I have committed unto him of that day." This is not only an affirmation of certainty, but a pointing out of the road by which he reached his high goal. Here is the order. I believed, I committed, I know.

We are accustomed to think of Paul's vision on the road to Damascus as all but compelling his conversion. That is not the case at all. Paul might have gone from the bright shining of that light to a deep darkness that he had ever known. What the vision did for Paul was to convince him of something to which you have been convinced from your mother's knee. That is the unique deity of Jesus. What then brought him to certainty, what enabled him to say, "The old has passed the new has come." He gives us the answer. "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." That is then on there Paul made his committal of himself. Through that committal he came to know. This is according to the promise of Jesus himself. "If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know. Will is here more of course than wishing. It is a willingness that leads to obedience.
That seeing "Seeing is believing", puts the cart before the horse.
The correct order is "Believing is Seeing". The Russians did not first see the sputnick and then come to believe in its possibility. They first believed, then came to know.

This puts the supreme knowledge within all our hands. We can not all feel as we should like to feel, but we can all obey. We can take our hands off our own lives and give it unreservedly to our Christ. Doing this we too should come to know, we too shall be born anew to a life full of hope, full of joy, full of power. Indeed, this will put us into a bright new world of assurance and certainty.

"Skys above are softer blue
Earth around is sweeter green
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen.

Birds with glader songs o'er flow
Flowers with richer glories shine
Since I know as now I know
I am his, and He is mine."
"Secured"

"Kept by the power of God."

I Peter 1:5

There are times when a minister needs the Bible to search for a text. He turns the pages of the Holy Book with the congregation in his ears. Personally I have gone in quest of a text more than once but so far in my memory, in my entire ministry I do not recall having found a single text when I was seeking one. It is only when I begin to read the Bible for myself that I find something for others. Then I find a text that proves to be the bread of life and the water of life to my own needy heart I am encouraged to believe that it might do for others what it has done for me.

It was as I thus read that I was gripped by one single word in this passage and that was the word "Kept." It is like coming upon a new flower in a garden where you fancied you knew every bud. It was like being surprised by some panorama you had never seen in a valley that was very familiar. "Kept." It is a heartening word. It is tender and as comforting as the arms of a mother to a tired and frightened child. It is a strong word. It is stronger than the hills—it is as strong as God.

Who are those that are kept by the power of God? Of course there is a sense in which all of us are the objects of God's tender care and keeping. That man who has forgotten God, that man who never prays, who never lifts his eyes to the heights, he is being kept by God's power. He must lean on God for every breath he breathes. He must lean on God for every crumb of bread that nourishes his body. There is a sense where every man—good and bad, saint and sinner—is kept by the power of God.

But God has a peculiar keeping for those who put themselves in His care. Those people of whom the Apostle speaks are not leading sheltered lives. They were not being shielded from the slayings and horrors of outrage and fortune. They had been fleeing broadcast throughout the world. They are shattered, broken, and persecuted.
yet kept by the power of God. They are kept in a peculiar way because they have given themselves to God and have allowed Him to make them His very own. The Apostle speaks of them as men and women who have been "begotten again to a lively hope." They are twice born men and women. They are those who have passed out of death unto life. By their surrender they have so given themselves to God, that God Who always accepts what we give, is able to guard them, to keep and uphold them as He can keep and uphold only those who put themselves in His hands. If you will give God a chance today He will surely keep you by His power.

II

Then it is further heartening to realize who it is that keeps these twice born souls. Now everybody needs a keeper. This is just as true of the weakest as it is of the strongest. No man ever lived who was able to keep himself. I was reading recently a description of that underground fortress that Hitler had provided for his own safety. There were vast rooms stored with provisions enough for an army but that scourge of mankind is as dead today as if he had tried to defend himself behind a spider's web. His fate has been the fate of every despot who has sought to wade straits to thrones and shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

A little more than a century before Hitler there was a man named Napoleon who won victory after victory as did Hitler. By and by his victories went to his head and he became intoxicated on himself. Thus made drunk by a sense of his own importance he declared "God is on the side of the strongest battalions." By this he meant that God did not count. "I count. Other men may reap as they sow but I can defy the law of nature and gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles."

In this faith in himself he marched on Russia the same as Hitler did more than a century later. He was far more successful than Hitler. He went his way to Moscow, took the city with the greatest ease and burned it to the ground. Then one day a snowflake fell and then another and somebody said "It's snowing!"
snowflake seems an innocent something. It falls so gently it would
not hurt a baby's eye. Yet it destroyed Napoleon's army—95% never got out of
Russia.

Then came Waterloo. Before Napoleon ordered his cavalry to charge he whis
dered something to his guide. Nobody knew what he whispered. It has been thought
that he asked the guide if there was any obstruction between his cavalry and that
of the enemy. The guide shook his head. Therefore the charge was ordered and the
flower of Napoleon's army plunged into a ditch but that ditch was filled with broken
bodies of men and horses.

Then before the battle it rained all night. Napoleon fought with his
artillery. Hugo says "he held his artillery in his hand as a good marksman would
hold a revolver." Now a drop of rain is a harmless something and yet these drops
that came softened the ground until Napoleon's artillery bogged down.

Finally the night before the battle Napoleon ate onions. He was inordinately
fond of onions. I hope he stood in his tent by himself. You know the onion is a
sleep producing vegetable. The morning after Napoleon was a bit drowsy. His keen
faculties were not so alert and alive as usual. Therefore at the close of that
fateful day a British soldier saw a man walking back to Waterloo leading his horse.
He touched that man on the shoulder and when he turned around it was Napoleon Bonaparte.
"God is on the side of the strongest battalion" said this great despot. In other
words God does not count. Then God took a snowflake and a drop of water and a
ditch and an onion and defeated him. Stripped him of his power. Chained him to
a rock in the sea where the only possession that was left him was an old pair of
military boots that he insisted upon having upon his cold feet when he died.

However strong you are, however brave, however rich in things you need a keeper.
Every man does. The only adequate Keeper is God.
III

What is the nature of this keeping?

Let it be said at once that to be kept by the power of God does not mean exemption from the slings and arrows of outraged fortune. God never coddles His children as we sometimes do. Of course a lot of us expect it. We go bravely forward until something trips us and then we fall flat and ask that contemptible question "Why did this happen to me?" Bear in mind what God is after in your life and mine. He is not seeking comfort for us -- He is seeking character. He is seeking to make us like Himself. He learned obedience from the things He suffered. If a cross was needed for Him we need not be surprised that it is needful for us.

If then God does not promise to save us from every fiery furnace He does promise to keep us even in the midst of that furnace. This keeping means victorious living. It means power to overcome the world, the love and the fear of it. It is just this sense of triumph, of victory that sings in the testimony of the saints throughout history. We find it in the Old Testament. We find it in the New Testament. We find it in our great hymns. It is in the hearts and upon the lips of the writers of the Psalms. "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want." "The Lord of Hosts is with us." "The God of Jacob is our refuge, therefore will not we fear even though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore."

We find the same triumphant note in the New Testament. "At my first offense" writes Paul, "all men forsook me...... notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and gave me inward strength that by me the preaching should be fully known......and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" and then he adds with a bit of a swagger "and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."
In days of stress and strain Martin Luther taught his people to sing:

A mighty Fortress is our God
A bulwark never failing
Our Helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.

The same confidence sings through one of our best loved hymns:

The soul that on Jesus still leans for repose
I will not, I will not desert to his foes
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

This keeping covers every circumstance of life. He is able to keep us when the sea of life is smooth, and every moment is jeweled with joy. He is able also to keep us when the storm is raging and when sorrow sits sobbing like a troubled ghost in every chamber of the house. He is able to keep us in times of failure when we are having a hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door. He is able also to keep us in our more difficult days of success when everything we touch seems to turn to gold. He can keep us in the days of health. He can keep us also in the days of sickness when pain with its fire shed feed bane from every nerve of our tortured bodies. He is able to keep us in every circumstance of life.

He is able to keep us at all seasons. His grace is sufficient in life's green spring. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thameto according to thy word." He can keep us when the blood of youth flows hot in our veins and when our temptations are fierce. He can also keep us in the stern stress of the middle passage,—that prosaic period when life tends to lose its romance, when pansies are displaced by potatoes. Then He can keep us when our strength is failing and when our steps are close to where the clouds are homing for the night. "Even down to old age all they people shall prove thy sovereign, eternal unchangeable love and when hoary hairs shall thy temples adorn like lambs they shall still in thy bosom be born."

We need to recover that sense of security that is the birthright of the saints.
IV

If God is willing and able to keep us in all circumstances and all seasons of life, how can He do it?

Listen again to the word of the Apostle "We are kept by the power of God through faith." Through faith,—that is the secret. I know of some who will grow restless and impatient here. "Faith," you say, "that is an old treadsaw word,—we have heard that until it has lost its meaning."

Well I fear there is some truth in that. Therefore it is well for us to remind ourselves that faith here is exactly the same kind of faith by which we live our daily lives. Practically everything we do is a matter of faith. Every letter you mail you mail it by faith. It is a silly thing to pull down the lip of a little box and drop a letter into it with confidence that the letter will reach your son in Europe or in some of the South Sea Islands. It is by faith that the business of the world is carried on. It is faith holds your home together. The very moment that faith dies your home becomes a wreck,—any home becomes a wreck.

You can see from this that faith is a sane something that shapes our conduct. If I were suddenly to shout "Fire!," your response would depend upon the confidence you had in my shout. If you should remain just as quiet and undisturbed and unmoved as you were before I shouted, it would simply mean you did not believe what I was saying. When my wife promised to marry me I acted accordingly. Had I not believed her I never would have spent $15.00 on a tailor-made suit and journeyed all the way from Texas to Tennessee.

As a young man practically penniless I made application for a scholarship to Harvard. It looked like a long chance but one night I went over to Flatwoods for the mail. All the mail that came that night was one thin letter. It was addressed to me. I opened it in the dim light of that little postoffice that was kept in a private residence and the letter read as follows: "Your application for
a scholarship to Harvard has been favorably considered. Please report at lower Mass. hall September 28th at 10 o'clock.

Then what? I did not look wisely at that letter and say "well it is too good to be true. If I got up to Cambridge I would have to borrow the money on which to travel. Suppose upon my arrival they would not give me a scholarship. Then I would be in a mess." No, I had better sense. I said to myself "On September 28th at 10 o'clock I will be in lower Mass. Hall if I am not dead and I will have this letter in my hand and I will expect that great institution to back up its promise." So we are to take seriously the promises of God and count on His making them good.

To have faith then is to obey. Any faith that looks to God for salvation without obedience is not in reality faith at all,—it is presumption. I had a friend once who decided that he could live without eating. All that kept him from dying was that when he fell into a coma they saved him by forced feeding. Yet there are multitudes of professing christians who expect God to keep them in spiritual health when they never feed on His word, when they never make a habit of prayer, when they never strengthen themselves through public worship. To claim to trust God while doing things upon which He must frown, or refuse to perform the duties that He has commanded is not faith at all,—it is presumption.

To that sin we all tempted. Jesus Himself was not exempt. You remember the first temptation that came to the Master in the wilderness. "Inasmuch as you are the Son of God" said the tempter, "command that these stones be made bread." That was an attack on the faith of Jesus. "Even God has lead you into the wilderness" the tempter said "if you dont take matters into your own hands you are going to die." But Jesus's faith in God was unshaken therefore he answered "man shall not live by bread alone." The tempter then went from by the side of Jesus and went far past Him. "Certainly God is willing to keep you when you are walking the path of obedience" he seems to say "not only so but He will keep you whether you are within His will or not."
Thus he set Him on a pinnacle of the temple and said "Cast Thyself down."
but Jesus answered "Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test." In other words
we are not to do a wicked thing and expect God to see us through. The laws of spiritual
health are just as fixed and reliable as the laws of physical health. If you break
these laws you are not living by faith,—you are dying through presumption. God
therefore can keep us only as we by our obedience permit Him to keep us.

For what are we kept?

In other words what is the end of our keeping? Hear again the blessed words
of the Apostle "we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

Salvation in the New Testament is used in three senses. First we are saved
from the moment we trust God. If the worst man in Jackson, if the worst man in all
the world would come in this house tonight and here and now commit his soiled and
broken life to the keeping of the Lord, instantly he would be accepted. Instantly
he would be forgiven. Instantly he would become God’s child. Instantly he would be
saved.

But if salvation is a single act, it is also a progressive something. The
very moment I trust Christ He saves me but I am only a babe in Christ. I must grow.
I must become increasingly like Him in purpose and in character. with the passing of
the days. Thus having been saved I am also being saved. "Behold as in a mirror the Lord
of the heart I am being transformed day by day into His image from glory to glory."

Finally salvation is something to which we look forward as the very climax
of our fellowship with God. The moment I trust Him here I am saved. As I walk with
Him I am being saved. But walking thus with Him I am headed toward ultimate salva-
tion. This salvation includes two priceless treasures. I am headed toward perfect
Christlikeness, toward that hour, toward that ultimate goal when every angel of God
shall look at me and say "how like Jesus Christ he is."
If we are thus kept by the power of God we are not only on our way to perfect, to complete likeness to Christ, we are also on our way to perfection of environment. We have a way of accusing our fathers of being too "other-worldly". We have gone to the other extreme. We are too "hither-worldly". We do not have much to say about heaven any more.

But let us bear in mind that there is such a place. Jesus was dealing in the subject when he said "I go to prepare a place for you". This place is not going to be ours very long. If there is not another place divinely prepared you and I are soon to be homeless. But there is such a place.

"Now one day" says the Apostle "God is going to bring the kept man and the kept place together and that will be heaven and that will be home." I think we ought to brace our tired hearts with this faith. It is about the most priceless possession in all the world. If I were to go back to my old home tonight, I would find it the most lonely place in all the world. The old house has fallen into ruins. And those that once made it home have passed into that other house not made with hands. There is really no road that leads to the home of my boyhood. But there is a wide open road to that home that I confidently expect to reach after this world with its griefs and its graves.

This is our faith. This ought to give us security. Therefore we sing. Therefore we make these immortal words of the Apostle our own. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
"Kept."

I Peter, 1: 5.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." There are times when we preachers read the Bible in search of a text. There are times when we turn its pages with a congregation in our eye. We read almost purely with reference to the other man. We think of his needs, of his sins, of his burdens and possibilities.

But there are other times when we simply read the scriptures for ourselves because if we are wise we never forget that we are just as thoroughly human as any to whom we preach. We never forget that we ourselves have a soul to be saved or lost. We remember that there is none who has greater need of the Bread of Life than we ourselves and that no one needs more to drink of the Water of Life. And for this reason, I say, every wise preacher will daily search the scriptures for himself. He will day by day turn to that "word of grace which is able to build him up."

It is upon such occasions I think that he finds his choicest preaching material. It is while thus reading that some blessed text will lay hold of him with the gladsome surprise of an unexpected friend. It was thus that I was gripped the other day by one outstanding word in this text, and that was the word "kept."

Its beauty burst upon me like a newly opened flower in a garden where I fancied that I was acquainted with every bloom. It came to me like an undiscovered panorama in a walk with which I felt myself perfectly acquainted. It came like a new note from a feathered friend whose every song I had fancied I knew by heart.

"Kept," - it is a wonderfully winsome word. It is a thrill with comfort and consolation. It is a word that builds a wall around you in the midst of your foes. It spreads a table before you in the presence of your enemies. It somehow quiets your fears. It comforts your loneliness. It girds you with strength in your hour of weakness and weariness.

"Kept" - who are the people that are blessed with this rare blessing? Who are the fortunate souls that are comforted with this fine comfort? Who are those that are watched over, cared for, guarded, sheltered, protected? The apostle is not speaking here of mankind in general. Of course there is a sense in which every man is kept by the power of God. God is the one in whose hand our breath is and whose are all our ways, whether we trust Him or neglect Him, whether we yield ourselves to Him in loving obedience or whether we are ungrateful rebels against Him.

But the ones to whom the apostle is writing are certain strangers scattered abroad, strangers in the world but not strangers to the grace of God. He is writing to people who "have been begotten again", as he expresses it. He is writing to twice born men. He is writing to those who have taken Jesus Christ as their savior and who have for that very reason passed out of darkness into light. These "kept" ones, then, are those who have through the riches of His grace become partakers of the divine nature.

And then notice how they are kept. Who is their keeper?
needs a keeper. I do not suppose any of us have lived thus long and have not discovered that fact. If I have not discovered it about you there is one individual about whom I have made the discovery, and that is myself. I have learned through a thousand falls and a thousand follies and failures and sins that I am incapable of keeping myself.

Yes, man needs a keeper. You know that and I know it. He has tried to keep himself in a thousand different ways, but it has always meant utter failure. There was a man once who thought he could keep himself by building barns and filling them with corn. But in so thinking he only stamped his brow with moral imbecility, and the epitaph we read upon his tomb is "Thou fool."

There was a man named Napoleon who after many a triumph decided that he could keep himself. He went to his own head, as another has pointed out, and declared that God was on the side of the strongest battalion. With that conviction strong upon him he invaded Russia. But God sent an army of snowflakes and drove him out and destroyed his army.

With that conviction he went upon the field of Waterloo. The night before the battle we are told that he ate onions and the next morning he was a little drawzy. His faculties were not so alert as usual. Then too it was raining. And besides this, between his own cavalry and the Ice there was a ditch about which the great genius knew nothing. And that ditch became the grave of his choicest soldiers. And this man who felt himself superior to God met disaster that day. As Bishop Quayle said, "God took a snowflake and a drop of rain and a ditch and an onion and defeated him."

Who is your keeper? I remember passing through Hampton Roads years ago when the United States Navy was drawn up there. And I confess that I took a kind of pride in those grim battleships over which waved the stars and stripes. I felt that as an American citizen I had them behind me. It is a wonderful thing to have the backing, to have the protection of a great nation.

I am told that some years ago an Englishman was arrested by the King of Abyssinia. He was put in prison without cause assigned. It took England six months to find it out. She at once demanded his release. The King refused. And only a few days later 10,000 men were on transports going to the rescue. They landed and marched 700 miles across the country, burst down the prison doors and set the captive free and brought him back to England.

But there is something infinitely better than being kept by a great government, and that is to be kept by the power of God. For the circumstances in which a government can keep you are limited indeed, and the power by which they keep you is also limited. But there is no limit to the power of God.

Doesn't it seem that we have in some measure lost the confident tone of assurance, the absolute certainty of security that belonged to the saints of other days? Think for a moment what the Lord meant to the Psalmist. "As the mountains round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about them that fear Him from henceforth and forever." "The Lord is my keeper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Therefore I will not fear though the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst
or the sea." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shall thou trust."

And then think what He meant to some of our hymn writers:-

"A mighty fortress is our God,
A refuge never failing,
Oh God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
A shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."

"A soul that on Jesus still leans for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to His foes,
That soul though all ne'er should endeavor to snake,
I will never, no never, no never forsake."

"Kept by the power of God" - that is power enough, is it not? That is sufficient protection even for men and women as weak and needy as ourselves. And that is the privilege that belongs to every one of us if we will only claim it. God longs to keep us. He longs to put round about us and underneath us the Everlasting Arms. He longs to send us forth into the world with that stride or assurance that comes to men who are conscious of the fact that they are kept by the power of God.

And this keeping is to save the whole circumstances of life. We are not to be kept in one department of our lives simply, but in the whole of them. Of course it means first of all, that we are to be kept from that grimmest of all enemies, sin. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." And this, my friends, does not simply mean from the penalty of sin. It means also from the deep damnation of its power. Sin shall not have dominion over you, "for He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the Throne with exceeding joy." But this keeping does not simply include sin. It includes all our foes. "There shall no evil befall thee" - that does not mean exemption from suffering. That does not mean that we will be excused from conflict and from pain. It does not mean that we will never be called upon to pass through any fiery furnace, but it means that God will walk with us in the midst of the flame and that the intended evil of it shall be transformed into good.

It means too that we shall be kept amidst all the circumstances of life. We shall be kept in youth when life's blood runs hot in our veins, when temptations are strong, when dangers are many. It means that we shall be kept in middle life when the dangers are even greater and when we will need to pray even more earnestly that the Lord "will revive His work in the midst of the years." And mark you, "there is a destruction that wasteth at noon day." We shall be kept in life's mid-day when we tend to lose our finer idealisms, when we tend also to lose our faith in man and our faith in God. And we shall be kept in old age. We shall be kept when the right hand has lost its cunning and the eye has lost its fire and we have come to the pathetic weakness of second childhood.

"Even down to old age all my people shall prove
My sovereign eternal, unchangeable love.
And when hoary hair shall their temple adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne."

We shall be kept in the midst of our successes, kept from arrogance and from pride. We shall be kept in the midst of our failures, kept from despondency and despair. We will be kept in the midst of health and kept when the deadly hand of disease plucks the roses from the face and the strength from our failing bodies. We shall be kept in the midst of the fine hopes realized and also in the midst of the blighting of those great hopes that leave the skies dark. (The old bachelor who loved the little girl)

Then, notice next the condition of our being kept, for mark you, God does not keep us unconditionally. I remember some years ago a man came to a little village where I was pastor and preached and he told a story of a girl who had once been converted and who later went into shame and lived her life there and died there. And he told how she summoned the preacher as she lay on her death bed and told him that she was ashamed to die because she had accomplished so little, but that of course she was saved because she had accepted Jesus years ago.

Now, if I know anything about the matter at all I consider this an immensely dangerous doctrine. God has nowhere promised to keep you unconditionally. How does He say these people here are kept? By the power of God through faith. That is the condition, "through faith."

And mark me, heart, it is no arbitrary condition. It is no more reasonable that God should make faith a condition of our receiving salvation and of our keeping saved than it is that He make blindness the condition of letting our room be flooded with light. Faith is the condition from the very necessity of the case. God would save men without faith if He could, but He can not.

What is necessary in order for business to be saved? Answer: faith. If men do not believe each other, at least in some measure, business becomes chaos. How is it that we travel in this country? Largely by faith. I got on a strange train on a strange track with a strange crew and lay down and went to sleep the other night because I had faith. How do you send letters to your friends? By faith. What keeps the home together? Faith.

And if we are kept by the power of God it is through faith. Faith is the hand by which we lay hold on the hand of our Heavenly Father. It is not a mere intellectual belief. It is an act of the will. It is trust. It is a confidence that leads to love and loyalty and obedience. That something that makes you believe because you trusted Christ once that you can now live as you please is not faith. It is godless presumption.

Do not flatter yourself that you are believing in God when you are merely presuming upon Him. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." For a man to refuse to eat and depend on the Lord to keep him alive is not faith, but folly. For a man to refuse to take any physical exercise and pray the Lord to keep him strong is not trust but tragic nonsense.

Of course we would recognize that at once in the realm of the physical, but we are not so keen to do so in the realm of the spiritual. How many people there are listening to me at this moment who never take any time to cultivate God's acquaintance in prayer, who never take any time to feed their souls on the sincere milk of the Word and who at the same time expect
to keep up a vigorous spiritual life. How many there are who neglect their known duty, who leave their church membership hundreds of miles away, who forget their church vows and their obligations and yet who flatter themselves that they are still saints. We need to pray again the prayer of the Psalmmist, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sin."

Oh heart, if you are to be kept you are kept through faith, but remember if it is real faith it is a faith that obeys. It is faith that makes you cultivate God's friendship. It is a faith that makes you seek the crowning King both in your own heart and in your community and in the wide world.

And last of all, notice what is to be the outcome of our keeping. To what end are we kept? God harsnests infinite energies for our keeping. What is to be the ultimate goal of it all? Will you hear it? It's a blessed consolation. "We are kept for salvation."

Now, I like that. I am glad He is not preserving us just to let us go out the gate of the tomb and lose us and let us lose Him forever more. I am glad He is not keeping us to lead us into that blind alley called the grave. I am glad that the goal of it all and the end of it all is not a shroud and a coffin and a narrow house in which to return to dust. No, He is keeping us for salvation.

Now, that word "salvation" is a big roomy word. People use this word here in two senses; one meaning is a present privilege that we enjoy. Every moment that we trust in Jesus, He says that we receive even now the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

But while it is true that the very moment you trust Jesus you are saved, it is also true that you are not perfectly saved. You become at once a child of God, but you are far from perfect. You are a long way from the fulness of the stature of Christ. And it is this perfected salvation that is spoken of here in the text. God is keeping us for a salvation that means for the absolute and utter triumph of righteousness in ourselves.

It is absolutely thrilling to think of the wonderful possibilities hidden in a human life. It is glorious to contemplate what God can do for the very meanest and most useless and weakest of us. There is not one single man so far gone in sin that he cannot be completely brought to the image of His glory if that man will only persistently trust in Him.

As I look upon myself today as I am there is much that is discouraging and depressing. In my own heart I do not see all things brought into subjection. But as I see Jesus I can know that there is coming a day when the spirit and mind that is in Him will also be in me. I can know that though I may fall short now, that one day I shall be like Him for I shall see Him as He is. That is the final, the ultimate salvation for which God is keeping every one of us who put our trust in Him.

And this salvation not only includes perfection in character, it also includes perfection in environment. The apostle tells us that there is someone else besides ourselves that God is keeping. While He is keeping us here He is keeping something for us over yonder. Just
Listen, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath begotten us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and unsearchable reserved in Heaven for you."

Have you trusted in Jesus, heart? Then you have an inheritance in a new and wonderful Country. You have an inheritance that death can not take away from you. Instead of robbing you it can only enrich you. God has made a reservation for you in the Eternal Homeland of the Soul. He is keeping a place for you that will suit you to perfection. And while He is keeping a place for you He is keeping you for that place. One day He is going to bring the kept man and the kept place together and that will be Heaven.

It is wonderful to have some loving heart longing out for you and waiting for you and getting things ready for you. That is the unceasing delight of coming home. There is somebody there who is waiting, who has things ready, who will be disappointed if we do not come. And if you fail to make your peace, calling and election sure in Heaven, there will be a place there untouched by angels' hands. God is keeping a place for you. Will you keep hard upon it and allow Him to keep you for that blessed place?"
THE CROSS BEFORE CALVARY

God chose him to fulfill this part before the world was founded. (J. B. Phillips)
1 Peter 1:20

The part that our Lord was chosen to fulfill was none other than the redemption of the world by his death on the cross. Thus this text takes us back into the eternities. The crucifixion of our Savior is of course a fact of time. He was put to death on a certain hill at a certain date. But if this cross is a fact of time it is also timeless. This death on calvary is the eternal heartache of God becoming articulate in time. Here is made visible before our eyes what our Lord suffers today and has always suffered, ever since he dared the infinite risk of rearing a human family.

We can glimpse some understanding of this when we realize that our Savior's life did not begin at his birth. When he opened his baby eyes in the stable at Bethlehem he was not looking upon the world for the first time. He had been from the beginning, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." When he reached the end of his earthly journey, he and he alone could offer this prayer: "Father, glorify thou me in thine own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made".

Since our Lord had known the glory and joy of the intimate presence of God from eternity, it is not surprising that he was not a stranger to joy as a citizen of our world. To think of Jesus as a gloomy man, as one with a face that creamed and mantled like a standing pond, is to be vastly wrong. He was a sunny man. He was a man who could laugh and sing. So true was this that he was a shock to the rock-ribbed religionist of his day.
they could easily accept John the Baptist as a religious man. He wore a hair shirt, lived off of locust and wild honey; never went to any kind of feast. But Jesus was the opposite. He never refused an invitation to dinner. He loved the companionship. He would seem even of certain outcasts. He was at home at weddings. Therefore the saints of Israel said he is no religious man, he is no more than a glutton and a wine taster and a friend of folks that are no more than worthless riff-raff.

If Jesus offended certain of the saints of his day by what he did, he offended them equally by what he said. He often had such clear words as these upon his lips. "Happy are the poor in spirit, joyful are the merciful, Oh the gladness of the pure in heart." Not only so, but he said these amazing words with such sincerity that even little children could feel as if the words were upon his lips. When John the Baptist spoke, he said, "He is with you." But when Jesus said, "Him I will send soup and substantially," it was as if he were saying, "This is the only one who can hear the words from him, but they found him unanswerable. They felt the sappiness of him so compellingly that they fought their way out of their mothers arms to climb into his lap. Children as a rule are not drawn to get into a thundercloud.

Another word that he had upon his lips again and again was this: "Be of good cheer." He said that in the presence of the ravages that sin had wrought. "Be of good cheer," he said to him who had been wracked by his own wrong doing. "Your sins are forgiven you." He also said this great word as he faced the final disaster of the cross. "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." We may be sure that the cheer that he offered the others, he carried in his own heart. We may also be sure that the cheer that he knew here, he had known before the world was born.

But if Jesus knew laughter, he also knew tears. He was a man of his tenderest heart, could not live in a world like ours, and not get his heart broken. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Those who knew him best,
were doubtless a bit shocked at his tears, by the grave of his friend Lazarus. Not often was he so deeply moved. But if his tear-wet face by the grave of his friend was a bit of a surprise, they were horrified to hear him sob aloud at the hour of what seemed to his supreme triumph. He was making his way toward Jerusalem. Everybody was delirious with joy. The King was at last going to receive his crown. Then came that terribly distant note. Somebody was sobbing aloud. That somebody was none other than the King himself. He beheld the city, and wept over it. His suffering here was at once timely and timeless.

Jesus was therefore a man both of laughter and tears — that is not surprising. He would not have been merely human if this was not the case. A gentleman speaking of a certain minister commended him of the fact that he never make any hearer neither laugh or cry. I could not join him in his enthusiasm. I could not remember that the last dummy I had seen in a show window affected me the same way. It did not bring a smile to my lips, nor even to my heart.

In affirming that our Lord was a man who knew joy, we are not to think that he was joyous simply in spite of the cross, but far more because of the cross. We read that when he took the cup, he gave thanks. Surely this was more than a profunctor asking of the blessing. It was a pouring out of his gratitude to the Father that he was able to give himself for our redemption. When he went out to the loniless of Gethsemane, he went with a song on his lips. When he prayed his last prayer with his friend, he asked that the joy that was his might be theirs. Indeed, if we may believe the writer to the Hebrews, his was the sunniest face that ever looked on our world. Quoting from the old Testament, he affirmed, "Thou hast annointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows".
He therefore knew laughter and tears, but laughter was the predominate note of his life.

Part II

Now when our Lord disclosed the cross to his friends, they were shocked and repelled. In indignation, Simon said, be it from thee, Lord. You are right in seeking to save the world, but to seek to save it by madly throwing your life away on the cross is unthinkable.

Simon's word was as reasonable as that that Satan had spoken to Jesus in the wilderness when he invited him to accept the kingdoms of the world, but to do so by by-passing Calvary.

Our Lord did not commend his friends for this seductive word. He rather gave him about the sharpest rebuke that he ever spoke to one of his disciples: "Out of my way Satan, you are not talking the language of God. It is not the language of God, you are talking the language of men." Then he added, "The cross is a necessity for me, but if it is a necessity for you, it is no less for me. I cannot do so on my own terms. He cannot do so on his own terms, he can only be my disciple at the cost of the cross."

What did Jesus mean? What is it to bear the cross? Some think of the cross as any unwelcome load that life may lay upon our shoulders.

I am thinking of a friend who suffered a great sorrow. Her only daughter, a girl of rare beauty, was married and scarred by ghastly disease. She became so bitter that either her pastor or friends could not break her rebellion. "God had no right," she seemed to say, "to lay upon me such a ghastly cross." For her grief was not a cross it was merely a galling load.
What, I repeat, is a cross? It is a burden that we take upon ourselves voluntarily. That was what the cross meant to Jesus. He had arrayed against him a little handful of the shrewdest politicians. It would be hard to find a more cunning black widow spider than Annas. In this he even surpassed his son-in-law Caiaphas. These were able to bring pressure upon Pilate who had a certain sense of justice, his supreme ambition was to keep his position. Therefore, he allowed these shrewd priests to manipulate him. He had through his cowardice little more choice of what he would do or say than some dummy like Mortimer Snud.

But in spite of his enemies, they were powerless to bring about his death. He affirmed to the last that he could summon twelve legions of angels if he so desired. We may be sure, therefore, that the powers of evil did not guide him to the cross. They did not wrench life but of his clinging hands and gripping fingers. Our Lord hereby affirms the opposite. "No man taketh it (my life) from me, but I lay it down myself." If we, by bearing the cross, become disciples it must be of our own choice.

But while the cross is not any load that life made chance to lay upon us, it is also true that any load may become a cross and exercise the lifting power of a cross. If we learn to accept it within the will of God. There is a parable that, once the birds had no wings. God threw the wings at their feet and commanded them to take up the wings and bear against their bodies. They did so at first with bitterness. But as they held them close to their hearts the wings grew and what was once only load, became a lifting power. Such an experience may be ours.

In imagination I slipped into a little service of the long ago. The certain was an African, I think an African negro, other day. A fine figure of a man stood up and gave this testimony: He was an African, I think an African negro. He spoke after this fashion:
"Years ago, as a proselyte, I went up from Cyrene to the great feast at Jerusalem. Early on that fateful Friday, I hurried toward the city. I hurried from the home of a friend where I had spent the night toward the city. To their amazement when I came near the city gate, the crowds were herded out from the city, instead of toward it. Asking what it meant, I was told that prisoners would that day pay the penalty.

I had never seen an execution, so I decided I would look at the grusome sight as long as I could bear it. I was eager, first of all to see the men doomed to die. So being a husky chap, I elbowed my way through the crowd until I was near enough to the prisoners to touch them with my own hand. I saw two of them were vigorous men, rough and hard as nails. The other, while a fine figure of a man, was evidently suffering from much blood letting. His back was gashed, even as I looked his knees buckled under him and he fell under the weight of his cross.

Then the ghastly thing happened! A strong hand gripped my shoulder, a short sword flashed in the sun, and a voice of authority was saying, "Take up that cross." I was on the point of refusing, thinking that such an order would be worse than death. Then a curse in my heart I glanced at the man whose cross I was to take. So far as I remember he never said a word but the very breath of him cooled the hot fires of my resentment. I fell in beside him and his silence seemed to say, "I am sorry that I involved you in this; but I am not quite up to myself this morning." But when he came to the foot of the hill he made as if to take over, and to my utter amazement, I heard myself say, 'Never mind, I will be glad to carry it for you all the way'.

And carry it I did. I stood by and watched the grim work of crucifixion. I heard him pray for his enemies, I heard him when at last kedropped his tired and tortured body into the arms of eternal love, saying 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit'.
By then my heart was so completely captivated, that I took up his cross gladly and from that day to this what was once my shame has become my glory."

That we knew the cross not only when we saw our chariot bathed when we saw this voluntary taking up of the burden of others; this coming only to accept even unwelcome burdens gladly within the will of God, that is to bear the cross, that is the way of discipleship. That was true before because a historic fact, it has been true ever since Calvary, It will be true forevermore. It is one of those facts that is at once timely and timeless.

How long has it been since two times two began to make four? Really it would be impossible to fix the date. When did it become true that it is more blessed to give than to receive? That didn't begin when Jesus uttered that word. It was eternally true therefore he said it. When the murderers of Jesus threw at him this taunt "He saved others, himself he cannot save". That is true, but it did not become true when these men said it. It would have been equally true had he said the opposite, "He saved himself, others he cannot save".

Therefore, this bearing of the cross, without which there is no discipleship, no abundant life, is eternally essential. Those who experience its life-giving power belong to no particular day, but to every day. We have a better opportunity to see and understand the cross than did the men before Calvary! Yet its life-giving power, while experienced in AD is also found long before it was first spoken by Jesus. They experienced in DC. Therefore, I am inviting you to sit with me at the feet of some of those who lived in the spirit of the cross before Calvary. They could sing, at least in spirit with ourselves these bracing words:

"O Love that wilt not let me go
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.

O Joy that seest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not gain That morn shall tearless be.
SIMONS CONFIDENCE

He who's faith rests on him shall never be disappointed. I Peter 2:6
(weymouth)

What a tremendous assertion! Yet so far as I know I have never either read or heard a sermon on this great text. Never before have I undertaken to preach on it myself. This is not the case because it promises so little, but because it promises so much. We tend to look at it, shake our heads in bewilderment and dismiss it as too good to be true. But as we shall see later what the apostle is really saying is that the God revealed through Jesus Christ is utterly dependable. He is infinitely faithful, he never has and never will finally disappoint a trusting soul.

Part I

"Never disappointed!" It is that bold word that gives us pause. This is the case because disappointment is a universal experience. It begins in our very childhood and often grows more intense as we get deeper into the years. It is the experience of every individual in every age. Of course there are some eras more sunny than others.

"Blest was it that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."

when we read that we know that the author was not talking about our generation. As that yesterday was hopeful so the prevailing tone of our day is one of disappointment.

So much is this the case that a gloomy outlook seems the order of the day. Indeed pessimism about ourselves and our future threatens with some to become a cult. This seems true of many of our writers of drama and fiction. Their pages are about as barren of heroes as
the Arctic ice-cap is of roses. Recently I read an enthusiastic review of the movie version of "A Cat On A Hot Tin Roof". The reviewer was thrilled by the accurate way in which the author of this play held the mirror up to nature. So impressed was I by his enthusiasm that I went to see this true picture of life.

The acting was indeed superb. But the tragedy was that there was not a single character that was worth reproducing. The nearest approach to a hero was Big Daddy. He was big only in his girth, his egotism, and his emptiness. It was a picture of life, but it was a vulture's view. That bird can fly over a landscape ribboned by waterfalls and colorful with flowers, but he will see only a dead pig in a briar patch. These are both real but they do not tell the whole story. This play is typical of those who glory in their glooms.

Then there are those whose disappointment rests upon more solid reasons. Twice in a single generation we have seen our world gutted by war. Not one of the great hopes for which we fought seems to have been realized. Instead of peace we are constantly tormented by the tragic tensions of the threat of another war. Then in addition, our racial hatreds have become alert and alive to a shocking degree. Ours, therefore, is a day in which it is easy to be disappointed and hard to maintain a sunny outlook.

Along with these are our personal disappointments which are as varied as our own hopes and dreams. Some of us are disappointed in our church. It has not triumphed as we thought that it should and would. We are disappointed in what we have found in our own religious experiences. "I used to think," a woman said to me wistfully, "that if I should ever become a Christian I should be the real article,
entirely different from the rather drab failures that I know so well."

But she continued sadly, "I find that it has not worked out any better for me." She was not angry and embittered. She was merely disappointed.

Many are disappointed in their family life. This is not true simply of those from broken homes. It is also true of many in homes that have held together. "Nothing is as good as we expected it to be, not even our marriage". So spoke a wife to her husband. She was not angry, not seeking to wound. She was just stating a disappointing fact. Many a husband might say the same to his wife. Though they still manage to live together, they are often mutally disappointed.

Then children are frequently disappointed in their parents. Of course, this is sometimes due to the super-wiseness of youth. But such is by no means always the case. Parents also are often disappointed in their children. How our boys and girls can gladden us! I have seen enough joy in the eyes of parents whose children had done well to increase the gladness of heaven. But I have also seen enough grief in the eyes of parents whose children had gone wrong to increase the anguish of hell.

"O my son Absalom—. Would I had died instead of you." It would be next to impossible to exaggerate the disappointment voiced in that cry. Absalom had so much, he was so like his gifted father. He had his father's charm, something of his father's ability. But he lacked love and loyalty. But if this cry voices the deep disappointment of a father in his son, it voices a yet deeper disappointment on the part of that father in himself. Indeed that which brought David's bitterness to a climax was the conviction that the blame for the whole terrible tragedy was his very own. Thus we are disappointed in others and in ourselves.
Yet this apostle, wise through long experience in Christian living declares that the one who trusts in God will never be disappointed. Paul with equal assurance makes this same bold assertion. The word is not original with either one of these radiant saints. It is an insight of Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. In this firm faith in God's utter faithfulness these three see eye to eye. Nor in this do they stand alone. The trustworthiness of God is a most emphatic assertion of the Bible as a whole.

Wherein is it true that the believer is never disappointed? It is not true in the sense that God grants every request that the believer makes regardless of its nature. It is not true in the sense that the trusting man is delivered from all conflict and struggle and bewilderment. Indeed it is generally true that the higher our expectations the greater our danger of disappointment. This has given rise to that cynical beatitude, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed".

While this is false it is a fact that some of the strongest believers have experienced bitter disappointment. Hardly a man of greater faith walks the pages of the Old Testament than Moses. For forty years in the power of his faith he struggled for the realization of one great dream. Yet when he seemed on the point of realization the prize slipped beyond the reach of his hand. Though privileged to see the land of his hopes, he was not allowed to enter and possess it. There is no doubt that this resulted, at least for the moment, in keen and bitter disappointment.

Paul was a tremendous believer. Girded by his faith he turned that ancient world upside down. But he did not escape disappointment. He had some infirmity that he calls a thorn. I have an idea that he suffered from epilepsy. How embarrassing it must have been to have a
sézure in the presence of his pagan audience. He felt his infirmity a great hinderance to his work. Therefore, he hurried with complete confidence into the presence of his Lord to ask for its removal. This he did only to suffer another shameful seizure the next day. Naturally he was terribly disappointed. But as he persisted in prayer, God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, he came to glory in what had once been a source of disappointment.

Jesus himself pays a unique tribute to John the Baptist. He regarded him as truly great. This man had lived for the one purpose of making known the coming of his Lord. He had demonstrated to the multitudes that he was a true prophet. The Jesus whom he had preached had come. He was now in the big outer world carrying on a mighty ministry.

But how about John? This gallant believer, a man of the wide, open spaces, had been arrested. He was now shut up in prison with the waters of the Dead Sea lapping their mournful monotony about his cell. But as rumors came day by day of the tremendous deeds of his Lord, John was made sure of a quick deliverance. But to his bitter disappointment nothing happened. How strange, he felt, that the one for whom he had ventured his very all should allow him to languish in prison as if he had neither the power nor the willingness to help.

At last the agony of it became more than John could bear. Therefore he sent two friends to Jesus to put to him a question, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" There is no measuring the anguish of that question. John is here telling Jesus frankly, "I am disappointed in you. I am afraid that I have been mislead. More horrible still, I am afraid that I have mislead others. Seen from my dungeon it strikes me that my life, in spite of all its wild hopes, has been no more than a tragic blunder." John was a great believer, yet he was disappointed.
What then, I repeat, does the Apostle mean? He is affirming that the man whose faith rests upon the Lord may suffer reverses, but will not be finally disappointed. Returns from certain outlying precincts may sound like defeat, but when a full count is made the believer will surely be elected. That is what a gallant old soldier said in a testimony meeting of the long ago. In youth's morning God had made Joshua some extravagant promises. He had told him that he would be with him as he had been with Moses; that not a man would be able to stand before him all the days of his life. So what? Now that the returns are in, he affirms that of all that God had promised not one thing had failed.

This, of course, is not to say that every undertaking of the good man will succeed. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" is a mistranslation. Furthermore, it is not true. All the adventures of the believer do not prosper. But the correct translation says, "In whatsoever he doeth, he shall prosper". That is true today and forever. The believer's bank may fail, his health may fail, but he himself will not fail.

Part III

This conviction of the apostle is based on his certainty of the utter adequacy of God. He is "The Rock of Ages". The Bible often speaks of our Lord in this fashion. Rock or stone is a favorite figure, especially with Peter. One reason may have been the promise of Jesus long ago to make him a rock of Christ-like character. Later when Simon made his great confession, Jesus had responded with enthusiasm. "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church." That rock, I am sure, was none other than Jesus himself. "Other foundation can no man lay."

Later when Peter and John were being questioned by the court as to how they had healed a hopeless cripple, Simon answered that the good deed was done "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom
you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. Then he adds this significant word, "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else."

Years later when he had come to a still firmer grip on the central certainties of his faith, he flings out this invitation, "Come". Jesus also had said, "Come". But there is this striking difference. "Come to me", said Jesus. But Peter said, "Come to him, to that living Stone...and like living stones be yourself builted into a spiritual house". Thus this apostle was glad to join with all his fellows in accepting the invitation of Jesus.

Now it was the conviction of Peter that though those who accepted this invitation might lose many a skirmish, they could never know ultimate defeat. He remembered still, I am sure, those words that he heard on the Mount. "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock... And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who builds his house upon the sand."

So far as we know these two men builted with equal skill. Both houses had to meet the testing of the tempest. The house that was built on sand went to pieces. It ended for its builder in utter disappointment. But the other, builted upon rock, stood firm. Thus our Lord joins with Peter in the great assertion, "He whose faith rests on him shall never be disappointed."

Part IV

Here then is an open road to victory. Life will work through faith in God and it will work in no other way. On looking into the glove compartment of my new car I found a small book. It was a kind of automobile bible. When I began to read it I discovered that the maker of the car was seeking to tell me how to treat the machine for which I paid my good money. Of course I might have resented his interference
and have torn the booklet to bits. I could have answered, "It's my car, I will treat it just as I please. You can't tell me what I am to do with my own."

But I was not quite that foolish. I rather said to myself, "This man is not trying to domineer, he is not claiming rights that are not his. All he is saying is this, 'I made the car, I know how the owner should treat it, if he is to get from it the largest usefulness and largest enjoyment'". Even so, the apostle is saying, "Life comes to its finest fruition through faith. There is no final disappointment possible for one who believes." To lack faith in God is to be disappointed. This is the teaching both of Scripture and of experience.

A few days ago the press carried the story of the passing of Robert W. Service. He was too modest to call himself a poet. But whether poet or not his verses thrilled many thousands. His writings brought him both fame and fortune. He came to possess in abundance the prizes for which most men struggle. But in spite of his success, he was not satisfied with his winnings. Listen to his swan song:

"Ere death shall slam the door,
Will you like me face Fate
And count the score
Futility."

Here is another who found life as difficult as did this poet in the days of the Yukon. He was guest in many a jail, he had been whipped and stoned so many times that his body was little more than a scar. Now he is in prison again facing the prospect of immediate execution. Listen to him as, with the poet, he counts the score. "I am already on the point of being offered; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award me on that day." Thus Paul joins Simon in shouting out of his own experience, "He whose faith rests on him will never be disappointed". Upon whom are you resting your faith?
"He whose faith rests on him shall never be disappointed."

I Pet. 2:6 (Weymouth)

What a tremendous assertion! Yet so far as I know I have never either read or heard a sermon on this great text. Never before have I undertaken to preach on it myself. This is not the case because it promises so little, but because it promises so much. We tend to look at it, shake our heads in bewilderment and dismiss it as too good to be true. But as we shall see later what the apostle is really saying is that the God revealed through Jesus Christ is utterly dependable. He is infinitely faithful, he never has and never will finally disappoint a trusting soul.

Part I

"Never disappointed." It is that bold word that gives us pause. This is the case because disappointment is a universal experience. It begins in our very childhood and often grows more intense as we get deeper into the years. It is the experience of every individual in every age. Of course there are some eras more sunny than others.

"Blest was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven."

When we read that we know that the author was not talking about our generation. As that yesterday was hopeful so the prevailing tone of our day is one of disappointment.

So much is this the case that a gloomy outlook seems the order of the day. Indeed pessimism about ourselves and our future threatens with some to become a cult. This seems true of many of our writers of drama and fiction. Their pages are about as barren of heroes as the Arctic ice-cap is of roses. Recently I read an enthusiastic
review of the movie version of "A Cat on A Hot Tin Roof". The reviewer was thrilled by the accurate way in which the author of this play held the mirror up to nature. So impressed was I by his enthusiasm that I went to see this true picture of life. The acting was indeed superb. But the tragedy was that there was not a single character that was worth reproducing. The nearest approach to a hero was Big Daddy. He was big only in his girth, his egotism, and his emptiness. It was a picture of life, but it was a vulture's view. That bird can fly over a landscape ribbed by waterfalls and colorful with flowers but he will see only a dead pig in a briar patch. These are both real but they do not tell the whole story. This play is typical of those who glory in their gloom.

Then there are those whose disappointment rests upon more solid reasons. Twice in a single generation we have seen our world gutted by war. Not one of the great hopes for which we fought seems to have been realized. Instead of peace we are constantly tormented by the tragic tensions of the threat of another war. Then in addition, our racial hatreds have become alert and alive to a shocking degree. Ours, therefore, is a day in which it is easy to be disappointed and hard to maintain a sunny outlook.

Along with these are our personal disappointments which are as varied as our own hopes and dreams. Some of us are disappointed in our church. It has not triumphed as we thought that it should and would. We are disappointed in what we have found in our own religious experiences. "I used to think," a woman said to me wistfully, "that if I should ever become a Christian I should be the real article, entirely different from the rather drab failures that I know so well." But she continued sadly, "I find that it has not worked out any better for me."

Many are disappointed in their family life. This is not true
simply of those from broken homes. It is also true of many from homes that have held together. "Nothing is as good as we expected it to be, not even our marriage." So spoke a wife to her husband. She was not angry, not seeking to wound. She was just stating a disappointing fact. Many a husband might say the same to his wife. Though they still manage to live together, they are often mutually disappointed.

Then children are frequently disappointed in their parents. Of course, this is sometimes due to the super-wisdom of youth. But such is by no means always the case. Parents also are often disappointed in their children. How our boys and girls can gladden us! I have seen enough joy in the eyes of parents whose children had done well to increase the beauty of heaven. But I have also seen enough grief in the eyes of parents whose children had gone wrong to increase the anguish of hell.

"O my son Absalom... Would I had died instead of you." It would be next to impossible to exaggerate the disappointment voiced in that cry. Absalom had so much. He was so like his gifted father. He had his father's charm, something of his father's ability. But he lacked love and loyalty. But if this cry voices the deep disappointment of a father in his son, it voices a yet deeper disappointment on the part of that father in himself. Indeed that which brought David's bitterness to a climax was the conviction that this blame for the whole terrible tragedy was his very own. Thus we are disappointed in others, in ourselves, and in our day.

Part II

Yet this apostle, wise through long experience of walking with God, asserts that the one who trusts will never be disappointed. Paul with equal assurance makes the same bold assertion. The word is not entirely original with either one of these radiant saints. It is an insight of Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. Yet even these three do not stand alone. The utter trustworthiness
of God is a most emphatic assertion of the Bible as a whole.

Wherein is it true that the believer is never disappointed. It is not true in the sense that God grants every request that the believer makes regardless of its nature. It is not true in the sense that the trusting man is delivered from all conflict and struggle and bewilderment. Indeed it is generally true that the higher our expectations, the greater our danger of disappointment. This has given rise to that bynical beatitude, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed."

How false! While it is true that those with no expectations miss disappointment, it is equally true that they miss all else of real worth. The pigs to which the prodigal had to minister were not in the least tormented by disappointment. No memory of springs flowing over white pebbles made them restless. No unrealized dreams disturbed their peace. The only disappointed individual in this pig pen was the prodigal. But the pigs paid for their contentment by remaining just where and what they were. But the prodigal, goaded by his disappointment found his way into his father's arms.

But disappointment is not a characteristic of the prodigal alone. Some of the greatest believers have experienced bitter disappointment. No greater man walks the pages of the Old Testament than Moses. For forty years he struggled for the realization of one great dream. Yet when he seemed on the point of realization the prize slipped beyond the reach of his hand. Though privileged to see the land of his hopes he was not allowed to enter and possess it. There is not doubt that this resulted, at least for the moment, in keen and bitter disappointment.

Paul was a tremendous believer. Girded by his faith he turned that ancient world upside down. But he did not escape disappointment. He had some infirmity that he called a thorn. I have an idea that
he suffered from epilepsy. How embarrassing it must have been to have a seizure in the presence of his pagan audience! He felt his infirmity a great hinderance to his work. Therefore, he hurried with complete confidence into the presence of his Lord to ask for its removal. This he did only to suffer another shameful seizure the next day. Naturally he was terribly disappointed. But as he persisted in prayer, God said, "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore he came to glory in what had once been the source of shame and disappointment.

Jesus himself pays a unique tribute to John the Baptist. He regarded him as truly great. This man had lived for the one purpose of making known the coming of his Lord. He had demonstrated to the multitudes that waited on his ministry that he was a true prophet. The Jesus whom he had preached had come. He was now in the big outer world carrying on his mighty ministry.

But how about John? This gallant believer, this man of the wide open spaces, had been arrested. He was now shut up in prison with the waters of the Dead Sea lapping their mournful monotony about his cell. But as rumors came of the tremendous feats of his Lord, John was sure of a quick deliverance. But gloomy day followed gloomy day and nothing happened. How strange that one for whom he had ventured his very life should allow him to languish in prison as if that one had neither the power nor the willingness to help.

At last the disappointment of it was more than John could bear. He sent two friends to Jesus to put to him a question, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" There is no measuring the anguish that prompted that question. John is here telling Jesus frankly and to his face, "I am disappointed in you. I am afraid that I have been mislead. More horrible still, I am afraid that I have mislead others. Seen from my dungeon it strikes me that my life,
he suffered from epilepsy. How embarrassing it must have been to have a seizure in the presence of his pagan audience! He felt his infirmity a great hinderance to his work. Therefore, he hurried with complete confidence into the presence of his Lord to ask for its removal. This he did only to suffer another shameful seizure the next day. Naturally he was terribly disappointed. But as he persisted in prayer, God said, "My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore he came to glory in what had once been the source of shame and disappointment.

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in spite of all of its wild hopes, has been no more than a tragic blunder." Thus believing, John was disappointed.

What then I repeat does the apostle mean? He is affirming that the man whose faith rests in the Lord Jesus will not be finally disappointed. Returns from certain outlying precincts may sound like defeat, but when the returns were all in, the believer will surely be elected. That is what a gallant old soldier is affirming in a testimony meeting of the long ago. In youth's morning God had made him some extravagant promises. He had told him that he would be with him as he had been with Moses, that not a man would be able to stand before him all the days of his life. So what? Now that the returns are in, he affirms that of all that God had promised not one thing had failed.

This of course is not to say that every undertaking of the good man will succeed. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" is a mistranslation. Furthermore it is not true. But the correct translation says, "In whatsoever he doeth, he shall prosper." That is true today and forever. The believer's bank may fail, his health may fail, but he himself will not fail.

Part III

This conviction of the apostle is based on his certainty of the utter adequacy of God. He is the Rock of Ages. The Bible often speaks of our Lord in this fashion. Rock or stone is a favorite figure especially with Peter. One reason may have been the promise of Jesus long ago to make him a rock of Christ-like character. Later when Simon made his great confession, Jesus responded with enthusiasm. "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church." That rock, I am sure, was none other than Jesus himself. "Other foundations can no man lay."

Later when Peter and John were being questioned by the court as to how they had healed a hopeless cripple, Simon answered that
the good deed was done "by the name of Jesus of Nazareth whom you
 crucified, whom God raised from the dead." Then he adds this sign-
ificant word, "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders,
but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation
in no one else."

Years later when he had come to a still firmer grip of the
central certainty of his faith, he flings out this invitation, "Come."
Jesus also had said, "Come." But here is this striking difference.
"Come to me said Jesus," but Peter said, "Come to him, to that the
living stone... and like living stones be yourselves builded into
a spiritual house." Thus Simon was glad to join with all his fellow
faith in accepting the invitation of Jesus.

It was the conviction of Simon that those who accepted this
invitation might meet many reverses but never ultimate defeat. He
remembered still, I am sure, those words that he heard on the mount.
"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be
like a wise man who built his house upon rock... And everyone who
hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish
man who builds his house upon the sand."

So far as we know these two men builded with equal care and skill.
Both houses had to meet the testing of the tempest. The house that
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Part IV

Here then is an open road to victory. He whose faith rests on
him shall never be disappointed. Life will work through faith with
God and it will not work in any other way. When I bought a new car,
looking into the glove compartment I found a small automobile bible. In that booklet the maker of the car was seeking to tell me how to treat the machine for which I had paid my good money. Of course I might have resented his interference and have torn the booklet to bits. I could have answered, "It's my car, I will treat it just as I please. You can't tell me what I am to do with my own."

But I was not that foolish. I rather said to myself, "This man is not trying to domineer. He is not claiming rights that are not his. All he is saying is this, 'I made the car. I know how the owner should treat it if he is to get from it the largest usefulness and the largest enjoyment.'" Even so the apostle is saying here as the Bible says throughout, "Life comes to its finest fruition through faith." To lack faith is to be disappointed. This is the teaching of the scripture. It is emphatically the teaching of experience.

A few days ago the press carried the story of the passing of Robert W. Service. He was too modest to call himself a poet. But whether poet or not his verses thrilled many thousands. His writings brought him both fame and fortune. He came to possess in abundance the prizes for which most men struggle. But in spite of his success he was not satisfied with his winnings. Fine in so many respects he seems to have had little appreciation for the values offered by a vital faith. Listen to his swan song:-

"Ere death shall slam the door,
Will you like me face fate and
Count the score?
Futility."

Here is another who found life as difficult as did this poet in the days of the Yukon. He was guest in many a jail, he had been whipped and stoned so many times that his body was little more than a scar. Now at last he is in prison again facing the prospect of immediate death. He too, with the poet dares to count the score. "I am already
on the point of being offered; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge will award me on that Day." So Paul joins with Simon in shouting out with his own experience, "He whose faith rests on Him will never be disappointed." Where are you resting your faith?
Honor all men. I Peter 2:17

"Honor all men". What an amazing word to come from the lips of this one-time orthodox Jew. As a member of the chosen race he had prided himself on his refusal to honor all men. No doubt with other Jewish boys he had been taught to thank God every day that he was not born a leper, a Gentile, or a woman. He certainly had not honored those poor relations of his, the Samaterians. He had not even honored all Jews. There were many among his own people upon whom he had looked with contempt. Therefore, for every one whom he had honored there were hundreds upon whom he had looked with scorn. Yet here he is with a map of the world upon his heart inviting us to join him in honoring all men.

Part I

This was a tremendous order for that day. It is the same for our own. What does Simon mean?

In commanding us to honor all men he does not mean that we are to honor all equally. There are those whom we honor spontaneously, without the least effort. But to honor certain others seems difficult if not impossible. I have heard a few teachers claim that they had no favorite pupils in their classes, that they loved one quite as well as another. Of course, this is never exactly the case. Every teacher has favorites, that is inevitable. The best one can do is to refuse to show favoritism. Thus in being called upon to honor all men it does not mean that we are to honor all alike. But it does mean that we are to give honor to all, both nations, groups, and individuals.
We are to honor all nations. That includes those near and those that are far away. We are to honor those who share our ideology and those who insist on having one that is vastly different if not flatly contradictory. We are to honor those nations that are friendly, that seem willing to join with us in building a secure world. We are to honor those unfriendly nations that seem bent on tearing our world to shreds and tatters.

We are to honor all groups within our own nation. That is equally important, and sometime even more difficult. Management is to honor labor, and labor management. A too great failure to do this in the past has cost countless treasure both in terms of money and in terms of those other values that are far more priceless. In my opinion one of the bright spots of our stormy day is that these two groups seem to be learning more and more to hold each other in mutual honor and respect.

A major scandal of the Church Universal today is its many divisions. I, for one, am not convinced that organic union is the answer. One great organization would tend to become self-sufficient and despotic. Our Lord never prayed that there should be one fold, but he did pray that there should be one flock, "so that the world may believe". Then more tragic even than our many divisions is the attitude of suspicion and scorn with which these divisions sometimes cause us to regard each other.

"How these Christians love each other", exclaimed the pagans long ago as they looked at the early church. "How these Christians knife each other", our present day pagans might exclaim. How harsh and
critical we often are in our judgments! What high claims we sometimes make for ourselves! What love we show for others! Personally, I could never persuade myself that the Sun of Righteousness shown only upon my little group. I could never bring myself to believe that the breath of God's Spirit breathed only upon those assembled within my church. Since Jesus himself said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another", I am forced to believe that none other is quite so utterly benighted as one who thinks he has a corner on the Light. We need each to respect the faith of the other.

Then in honoring all men we must come to grips with a question that is as inflammable as gasoline. This honor is to include that Negro group about which many are at once excited and embittered. These Negroes are among us not of their own choice nor the choice of their ancestors, but they are among us by the choice of our ancestors. They are a part of our nation. They are also a part of the human race. To hold them in contempt for being black is not to reflect upon them so much as it is to reflect upon the God who made them.

As a son of the south I can appreciate the vast difficulties that this problem involves. I can understand how good men might differ as to the wisdom of immediate integration in certain sections of our nation. I can understand how some men of good will might be convinced of the impossibility of seeking to compel one race to honor another by legal enactment. I can understand why some should ask for time. But there is one attitude that we must have if we are rightly to claim the name of Christian, that is one of honor and respect for these people as a race and as individuals. For this word, "Honor all Men", 
is more than good advice, it is a command. To refuse to obey it is a sin both against man and God.

Then to speak a word that at first glance may seem superfluous, we are to honor our own families. By this I do not mean that we are to honor our far off ancestors. I am not calling on you to worship your family tree. We all have one. Many years ago I read in a history of our family written by one of my wealthy kinsman, that while there was none of my kin on the Mayflower, yet the twinship of the Mayflower, the Speedwell, had as its captain one John Chappell. When I sought to verify this exciting fact by looking into a history of the United States I read as follows: "The Speedwell, the twin-ship of the Mayflower, was forced to put back to port on account of the treachery of its captain". So much for my Grandpa John. In case you feel disposed to laugh, it might be well to remember that if you were to climb high enough up your family tree you would find something hanging there that is not apples.

The family I am urging you to honor is made up of those prosaic people with whom you live, and whom you really love, but whom you often fail properly to honor. It is well for husbands and wives to love each other, but in my opinion, it is even more important that they have a genuine respect for each other. I believe a solid respect is a better foundation upon which to build a permanent marriage even than romantic love, as important as that is.

Furthermore, parents and children are to respect each other. This wise old Book puts great emphasis upon the importance of the child honoring the parent. "Honor your father and mother", writes Paul, "(this is the first commandment with a promise) "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth". His conviction is
that the child who obeys will both add years to his life and life to his years. This he will do not as a reward, but as a result of his obedience. The promise is based upon the assumption that the parent, having lived longer than the child, might know more. That is only reasonable as silly as it might sound to certain teenagers.

Then in order to make it possible for the child to honor its parents the parent must honor the child. It is a deadly and dangerous sin for parents ever for any reason to treat a child with contempt. For instance, they are to shun as a pestilence those ugly tongue-lashings that make war on selfrespect. As a teacher I discovered that I could give even a teenager a sound licking and bind him to me in closer friendship, if I first talked the matter over with him with genuine respect. But without laying a hand upon him I found that I could completely alleviate him by merely "giving him a piece of my mind".

Finally we are to respect ourselves. There is no substitute for a high and holy self-esteem. "Self-reference, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alone lead life to sovereign power". Of these I am sure that the most important is self-reverence. "To thine own self be true, then must it follow as night the day that thou canst not be false to any man". To walk this huge room requires a solid respect for one's self.

Part II

Why are we to honor all men.

This is a word of command from Our Lord. But as is the case with all his other commands, it was not given for his benefit. It was given for ours. Obedience to this command is humanly helpful. It
would enable us the better to live together. The other day a rooster found himself locked in a stall with four large mules. Winged by fear this rooster managed to secure a perch on the manger. From this seat of greater security he spoke these words of wisdom to his companions. "Gentlemen, we must respect each others feelings in this situation or we might step on each others toes". Mutual respect is always a help to that difficult problem of living together.

This is the case because if I really respect you I will indicate that respect by my treatment of you. If I truly honor you I will undertake to deal fairly with you. I will refuse to do you an injustice. But it is so easy to be unjust to one for whom you have no respect. He is too inferior to deserve fair play. If I respect you I might even treat you as I should like to be treated. But such a standard is too high if I regard you as deserving only my contempt.

Not only does honor and respect color our treatment of others, but what is equally important, our whole attitude toward them. It is quite possible to insult a man while you serve him. There was nothing wrong with the piece of gold that the knight in Lowell's poem flung at the feet of the beggar. But there was something so vastly wrong in the attitude of the giver that the beggar left the coin in the dust. Right or wrong the tremendous giving to the needy nations by America has failed fully to win their friendship. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they believe that our liberality is born more of self-interest than of interest in and honor for themselves as people.

Then if we honor all men we shall not only show it by our conduct and attitude, but such an attitude is likely to win the same kind of response from others. Here as elsewhere we do get what we give. I
remember two neighbors who many years ago had a dispute over a boundary line. They wisely decided to arbitrate instead of going to law. But as they sat about it, one of them said to the other, "I am going to respect your feelings in this matter, and you've got to respect mine". But this fine gentleman was on the wrong road. Honor can no more be won by mere force than love. Here, I repeat, we get by giving.

Naturally by truly honoring each other we have a far better chance to live together in harmony. This is true among nations. It is true among our various groups. It is certainly true within the family. It is even true of the individual. In fact, it is only as we respect ourselves as individuals that we can live with ourselves with any degree of inward harmony. The man who has little or no respect for himself is likely to be waging a constant civil war.

Then a solid self-respect has a way of building a fence about ones' life. Esau was born to a great privilege. He might have been the spiritual leader of his clan. But for lack of a solid self-respect he sold out, and Daniel took the opposite road. Though his advancement, his very life, seemed to depend upon his eating the king's meat and drinking the king's wine, he refused to outrage his conscience. Being girded by a profound self-respect he "purposed in his heart that he would not defy himself."

As self-respect guards life against the forbidden, even so it drives towards the recognizing and discharging of obligations. Every self-respecting man says "I am debtor!" He insists on carrying his share of the load. He is bent on discharging his obligation whether it be to his nation, his community, his church, or his family. A self-respecting man will not sacrifice upon way-side altars. He will rather dedicate himself to discharging his obligations to God and at least is involved in honoring his men.
Part III

How did this unlettered Jew reach these heights?

His new attitude to men was born of a new attitude toward God. His honoring all men was made possible by his faith in God. We shall never attain in any other way. Communism claims greatly to honor the people, but it cares nothing for the individual. But Simon's honoring all men, I repeat, was born of his faith. Under the guidance of the Spirit, he had paid a visit to the home of a Roman officer. That, I am sure, was his first visit to a Gentile home. Here for the first time also he had preached to outsiders. As he preached he saw God do for these pagans just what he had done for his fellow Jews. Thus he had been driven to the conviction that God does not show partiality but loves and honors all men. To be God's servants we must of necessity share his attitude toward, not some, but all our fellows.

If we truly believe in God we shall honor all men, because every man is the child of God. He is therefore a member of the royal family. "Thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him in glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hand!" Every man regardless of race, or creed, or color, is the son of the Most High. However much he may have marred himself he is still a child of the Father. Nothing can completely destroy the divine within him. We are, therefore, to honor all men because all men are children of God.

Then we are to honor all men because God honors them, not only by creating them, but by redeeming them through the death of his Son. God loves every man as if that man were his only child. That great
word from John's gospel, "God so loved the world", is infinitely precious. He loved the world not as a group but as individuals. "He loved me and gave himself up for me". We are therefore to honor all men because they have been "ransomed not with perishable things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ".

One tells the story of a certain scholar who centuries ago having been chased out of his home country took refuge in Lombardy. Here he fell on evil days. Beset both by poverty and illness he was carried in his uncouth and ragged condition to a hospital. Here a group of doctors held a consultation over him. One of them suggested in Latin, the learned language of that day, "Let us experiment with this worthless fellow". "Dare you call one worthless", questioned the patient, "for whom Jesus Christ did not distain to die?" We are to honor all men because we are to see in every man not only a brother, but a brother to whom Christ died.

We are to honor all men not only because all men are children of God, redeemed by the blood of the cross, but because every man is capable of becoming Christlike. "To them gave he power to become". Power to become, that it seems to me is about the greatest power in the universe. There is no measuring how far wrong we can climb if we take the wrong direction. Certainly there is no measuring how far we can climb if we take the right direction. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is".

"Honor all men". That is more than good advice. It is a command. The fact that it is a command means that it can be obeyed. It is more than expedient. It is a necessity. There is simply no fellowship
with God without it. The elder son being too good to honor his prodigal brother, missed the feast. So shall we if we take his course. There is no place at the feast of the fullness of life for him who looks with scorn upon his brother.
Like Sheep

"For you were straying like sheep." 1 Peter 2:25

The Bible excels all other books in its high estimate of man. On its pages he is pictured as a grand creature. Being but little less than God, he is meant for mastery. He is of such supreme worth that God, his father and creator, is willing to pay any price even to calvary to win him to his fellowship. But along with this high estimate there is this striking paradox. If there is nothing too good to be said for man on the pages of this book, there is also nothing too bad. Though made for dominion he often chooses the role of a slave. He is constantly compared to one of the silliest and most helpless of all God's creatures. He is persistently pictured not as lion-like but as sheep-like. This figure runs throughout the Bible.

For instance when Simon Peter reminds these saints to whom he is writing that they were once straying like sheep, that word is not original with him. He is quoting from one of the greatest of the prophets. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way." It is a striking fact also that though this likening of ourselves to sheep may not seem flattering, yet it is the very heart of the most popular song in the Bible. Not only so but this song is the most popular in the literature of the world. More people know it by heart than any other song ever written. We call it "The Shepherd's Song."

We are not sure of the author's name. Tradition has credited this song to the Shepherd King. If he wrote it, I am sure he did not write it in his youth. It is the song of a man who has lived much and experienced much. If David wrote it, he must have written it after
I Can Express That

he got deep into the years. One day looking upon his court, memory leads him back across his yesterdays. This court becomes a flock of sheep. He does not see the flock over which he had once watched. But here is a flock, where he knew everyone, by name. Here is one who had a genius for getting lost. Here is another that bears a scar. At the risk of his life he rescued that sheep from wild beast. He realizes how he cared, how there was no danger that he would not gladly dare for their safety.

Then there came a thought that set his heart to music. As I was concerned about my sheep, there has been one who has been far more deeply concerned about me. There has been one who has sought me when I have strayed. There has been one who has led me in green pastures, who has restored my soul, who has been with me in the valley of the shadow. The Lord is my shepherd. Since he has been so sufficient for my yesterdays, I am sure that his goodness and mercy will follow me through all my to-morrows.

When we come to the New Testament, this same figure is even more persistent. Sometimes we may be shocked at certain crudities of the Old Testament, but what I find far more impressive is how much, those ancient saints knew about God before they had seen him revealed in Jesus Christ. The vision of the author of this Shepherd Song was so accurate, that Jesus could say "I sat for the likeness." I am the Good Shepherd, of whom the poet sang. Being the good shepherd, I lead my flock. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. I call them by name. I lay down my life for them.

One day when he looked upon a great crowd, he saw them not as joyful and unified personalities. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. They were scattered, dejected, bewildered, without a leader, without any high purpose. The pathos of their plight broke his heart. As he looks upon our bewildered world to-day, he still sees, too often, sheep without a shepherd.
shepherds.

Part I

Now in comparing man with a sheep, we are not to understand that these two creatures are alike in every respect. They are further apart than the spaces between the stars. "How much is a man better than a sheep?" is an exclamation of Jesus, himself. Yet they do have certain characteristics in common.

1. They are similar in their silliness. It is hard to overestimate the silliness of a sheep. He will often leave the greenest of pastures and the best of shepherds to go into the wilds where the grass is far less green. One day my father brought me a wee lamb only a few hours of age. I taught him to drink milk from a bottle. He grew and we became friends. I could call him and he would answer more readily than a child. He seemed the fattest and the happiest of lambs. But one day he disappeared into the hills. When I found him he ran to me as eagerly as a frightened child to his mother. He was so glad to be back again to the shepherd. But in spite of this he went a second time. Again I went in quest of him, but I found only his gnawed bones. The dogs had found him first. He had thus died, not on a high crest, but from sheer silliness.

As unflattering as it may seem, we are often like that. The charge that Isiah brought against the people of his day was their refusal to think. "My people", he declared, "do not consider. The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib. But Israel does not know. My people does not consider".

If Isiah were here today, he would throw up his hands in the face of the stampeding crowds and ask the same questions he asked on the streets of Jerusalem. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not?"
We persistently refuse to learn, refuse to think. Thus we choose roads that millions of feet have trodden before us to their disappointment. But we are exceptions to the rules. We are sure that we can find a fountain where others have only found a mirage. Jesus was constantly urging people to think, to count the cost. He knew that it was only as we thought intelligently that we should turn our feet back to God.

2. Then we are like sheep in our helplessness. On the surface this seems glaringly false. A sheep is a meek creature. It is helpless against its foe. We are conspicuous for meekness. We easily become fierce and savage. We are capable of doing battle in a ghastly and terrible fashion. But our superior strength adds to rather than decreases our helplessness. Our genius at making weapons of defense makes ours the most helpless day that the world has ever known. No nation can possibly save itself. The more fierce it is, the greater its danger.

The sober truth is that man as a group and individually is helpless—is powerless to save himself. Recently religiously placid Harvard has been stirred. President Eusey has dared to remind great University that secularism is not enough. No nation, no group, no individual is adequate without God.

We readily recognize the powerlessness of certain individuals to save themselves. Before Alcoholics Anonymous will undertake a case the person seeking help must make two assertions. First, I am a hopeless slave. Second, I believe there is a power that can help me. But the need of divine help is just as true for the upright, decent man. I am called upon to love my neighbor as myself. I cannot do this without divine help.

3. Man is sheeplike in his proneness to go astray. There is nothing that a sheep can do quite so readily as to get lost. That is true also of you and me. We are born into a realm of choices. From
our very infancy there rings in our ears the upward call. But there also

fings the downward call. Temptation is a universal experience. No moral

achievement, however great, will exempt us from it altogether. We are

therefore constantly prone to go astray.

part II

Now the persistent danger of straying is, quite dangerous.

1. It is dangerous because it is so easy. We love the easy way.

Jesus picked a certain road that was congested with traffic. It was

as crowded as a super highway on a holiday. Why were there such crowds?

It was not because the road led to a goal. It led to distraction. It

was crowded because travel upon it was easy. Too often we are more

concerned for comfort than for character. (See column of page)

2. Then we stray without being aware of it. My foolish sheep

found a little tuft of grass. Having nibbled it 

he saw another

a few steps ahead. 

He was so preoccupied with his own affairs that he

did not hate the shepherd, he simply forgot him. We stray simply by

turning to our own way. In truth the very essence of all rebellion is just

this--my way instead of God's way. We often become so preoccupied with

our own schemes that we go astray without being aware of it.

For this reason, it is well for us, to take stock of ourselves. Do

you make as much of prayer as you once made? Do you feed your soul by
daily reading of the Bible? Are you constant in your worship? Have

you kept up and increased your giving? Are you becoming more 

in your religious life, or are you becoming mere savorless salt?)

1. Continued) Straying is easy because it requires no high purpose,

no determined effort. In this respect it is like drifting. "We ought

to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heart, lest at

anytime we drift", is the wise warning of the writer to the Hebrews.

What must I do to drift? Nothing! What must I do to stray? Nothing!
"Who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness"? I Peter 3:13 (Moffatt)

"Who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness"? "Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right," is the rendering of the Revised Standard Version. Goodspeed translates it "Who is there to hurt you if you are eager to do what is right." "Who in the ordinary way is likely to injure you for being enthusiastic for good"? is the rendering of J. B. Philipps. Zealous, eager, enthusiastic, passionate—these are all strong, vivid words. Not one of them is feeble. Not one of them is suffering from "tired blood."

Now this vigorous word of Simon's is quite at home in the New Testament. A wise man once said, "The truth does not generally hide in a thicket of superlatives". While that is a fact, this apostle does not appear to be aware of that truth. At least he seems to have no fear of exaggeration. When, for instance, he reminds his fellow saints of the light into which they have come, it is "marvelous light." When he writes of their joy, it is a joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory." Naturally, therefore, when he calls us to a pursuit of goodness, it must be a pursuit that is aflame with passion.

Part I

What is Simon urging?

He is not calling us to a half-hearted loyalty, but to a full and passionate committal. I am sure that as he writes this, he is once more listening to the Master on the Mount. He is hearing again these gripping words, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness."

To have no hunger is an indication of sickness or of death. Hunger
means desire. It may mean intense longing. It may mean a longing so intense that it becomes positive torture. It can become such an agony that it will drive to cannibalism. To hunger is therefore to desire with passion.

If hunger can become a gnawing agony, thirst can be a fiery hell. Perhaps the most fiendish mode of torture ever devised was crucifixion. Certainly one of its supreme agonies was the burning thirst engineered by so much blood-letting. In the grip of the torture of thirst men will often drink any kind of water. They have been known to drink sea water knowing that the result would not be the slaking of thirst, but madness and death. Thus Simon is here urging that we long for goodness with passionate intensity.

Part II

Why does the apostle insist that our longing for goodness be a veritable passion? He is here following the lead of his Lord who said that all such are blessed. But wherein are they blessed? What is the good of such hungering and thirsting? They are good in the first place because they are indications of life. Not only so, but they indicate normal and healthful life. To have no appetite is a mark of either sickness or death.

Then those who so hunger and thirst are blessed because they already possess to some degree the goodness for which they long. Cromwell wrote to his daughter years ago that a seeker is the next best thing to a finder. Indeed the earnest seeker has already found in some measure or he would not seek. The man who intensely longs to do good and be good has already at least partially attained. If he were wholly bad, he would have no such longing.

Here and there I have met earnest and bewildered people who were tormented by the fear that they had committed the unpardonable sin.
Of course the one un-ardonable sin is to be too indifferent to accept pardon. Therefore the deep concern of these earnest souls was a proof that they were not guilty of such sin. The fact that we are disturbed, that we do hunger and thirst means that we have in some measure attained, that even now our Lord is at our door knocking with an infinite yearning to enter and become at once our guest and host.

Further, those who hunger and thirst after goodness are blest not only because in some measure they have attained, but because they are on the way to fuller attainment. To have a passion for goodness, to be enthusiastic to be right and to do right is surely to make progress. Passionate earnestness wins in every realm of human endeavor. Impossibilities have a way of taking to their heels at the coming of one who is desperately in earnest. When a man of passionate desire gets on his knees, the angels hurry to open the very windows of heaven. All worthwhile victories are won by the eager, the enthusiastic, the passionate.

It was this passion in the first century that sent a little handful of otherwise commonplace people utterly to change the hard world of which they were a part. They won as another has pointed out because in the power of this passion they out-lived, out-thought and out-died the pagans of their day. Their flaming zeal fired and won human hearts all over the Roman Empire. Such passion is still the open secret of victory.

But to try to win in any undertaking without something of this is to court failure. People by tens of thousands go to see football games. Those thousands, however, would dwindle to zero if the players were to become listless and half-hearted. But even a game played by the indifferent would be more thrilling than the activities of a church about which our Lord would have to say, "You are luke-warm and neither cold nor hot."
A man wrote a book some years ago on "How To Win Friends and Influence People." A better name would have been "How to Win Friends and Use People." I can speak with authority on how not to win. Here is the answer--never get in earnest about anything or anybody. To be passionate for goodness then means some degree of attainment. It is the roadway to greater victory.

Then Simon gives another reason that tends to take us by surprise. He tells us that we ought to be passionate for goodness because that is the road to security. Our day has had much to say about security. One reason for this is that we have felt so insecure. Most of the roads that we have taken to find security have ended in some sort of a desert of disappointment. Here is a security that is real. Simon states it in the form of a question. "Who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness?"

This question demands a negative answer. It is like that asked by Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The answer to that question is that nobody, nothing, can separate us from his love. Paul names some of our deadly foes only to dismiss them as sheer futility. Even so when Simon asks, "Who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness?" The answer is--nothing can harm you! Nothing in earth or hell! To be passionate for goodness therefore is to possess a security that really makes secure.

Part III

That sounds amazing. Wherein is it true?

It is certainly not true because the passionate man is exempt from all outward foes. The prophets of the Old Testament were a unique group. They were possessed of a passion for justice, righteous, goodness. But this did not exempt them from suffering. It did the exact opposite. "Which of the prophets did not your father's persecute"? shouts Stephen as he is paying the full measure of his devotion. "So persecuted they the
prophets", is the affirmation of Jesus.

Indeed of all the people who do not find safety by being sheltered from harm, the passionate saint is the very last. Here is a bit of their brief biography, "They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword, they went about in skins of goats, destitute, afflicted, ill treated...wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." They were indeed a bloody and battle-scarred lot.

In what then did their security consist? They were secure in that by putting Christ first, by living within his will, they made it possible for God to change all their evil into good, their losses into gains, their sobs into song. This did not happen once, but always. Everything whether laughter or tears, whether triumph or tragedy, became grist for their mill. Real loss was therefore for them impossible. Simon had learned this in his own experience.

There was a time even after he had become a disciple when passion for goodness was not first. Simon was devoted to his Lord, but he was more devoted to playing it safe. The sharpest rebuke that his Master ever gave him was when, on the heels of his great confession, he had openly repudiated the cross. Later when he took to his heels in the garden, later still when he shamefully lied as he warmed by the enemies' fire, his supreme passion was not goodness. It was rather to escape and save himself.

But this was of yesterday. Standing now with John before the court that had sentenced his Lord to death, when commanded not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, he gives this bold answer. "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." Here his passion is not to escape but to do right.

That this was not a vain boast becomes evident when he is again
brought before the court. Here they remind him of his disobedience. "We ordered you to keep silent, but you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching." Given another chance, instead of promising to bow to their command, he boldly asserts, "We must obey God rather than man." Even when a little later, he with his friends, is shamefully whipped, they depart not in anger, not vowing prudence, but rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer his honor for his name.

This rejoicing in suffering is not unique. Listen to Paul, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his sake." To believe in him was an unspeakable privilege. Through that faith they have been loosed from their sins, brought into his fellowship, filled with power. But even this was not the climax. Their privilege reached its highest height in that they had been privileged to suffer for him.

Now there is nothing morbid about this rejoicing in suffering. These saints did not love pain and persecution for itself. They did not go about their daily tasks seeking someone to burn them at the stake. They rejoiced in suffering because their supreme devotion was to their Lord. To love on the human level means a willingness, even an eagerness to share with the one we love. We desire to share their laughter, we desire also to share their tears. When therefore a husband recently told his wife how he had won through a hard ordeal alone, because of his eagerness to spare her, his story brought almost as much pain as pleasure. "Why," she questioned with keen disappointment, "Why did you not tell me that I could have shared it with you"? Love longs to share. In fact the heart of love never suffers quite so deeply as when sharing is impossible.

Then there is the final reason why even the suffering involved in wholehearted devotion in Christ brings enrichment. His grace is always sufficient. Therefore, the greater our need, the richer will be his supply. It is only when in our loyalty to him we give our all that we
are capable of receiving his all. To a life so dedicated, no real harm can ever come.

Here is the story of one whose life confirms the truthfulness of the apostle, though on the surface it seems to contradict it. From early youth Jim Elliot was possessed of a passion for goodness. He realized that such a passion might prove costly, but that did not frighten him. He put Simon’s conviction in his own words. They were these, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to win what he cannot lose."

Possessed by this faith he dedicated himself in youth’s fresh morning to the work of a missionary. Under the guidance of the Spirit, as he believed he chose Equador for his field. Not only so but he chose the most savage tribe of Indians in that land. Having arrived on the scene, for days and weeks and months he, with four companions, sought to soften and win the good will and confidence of those whom he had come to serve. This they did by giving them presents day by day from their small plane, and finally receiving presents from them.

At last feeling that the time was ripe, he with his four friends, dared to land among these fierce savages. But before Jim Elliott or one of his companions could build a church, before one of them could preach a single sermon, indeed, before they could even tell why they had come, all were ruthlessly murdered. What an utter waste! It looks as if Jim’s passion for goodness cost him everything and brought him naked nothing.

Yet such was not in reality the case. Where Jim sought to farm the fields promises even now to grow golden. If I were privileged to question Jim in that land of high adventure to which he has gone, I wonder what he would answer.

"Once you used to say, ‘he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to win what he cannot lose.’ You certainly did your giving early and
fully. How has it worked out"?

Somehow I am perfectly confident that he would answer, "It worked out with a richness beyond my wildest dreams. The wisest choice I ever made was to give with passionate abandon. This I found true in the yonder. I find it true also in the here and now." Surely, therefore, the highest wisdom for all of us is to heed this word of the apostle, "Who will wrong you if you have a passion for goodness"? Such a passion has both the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.
This Above All

"Above all, hold unfailing your love for one another". I Peter 4:8

Part I

Here Simon who had known Jesus in the flesh, who had known him in his resurrection, who had long known the fellowship of his service and of his sufferings is telling us what he considers fundamental in the Christian life. In so doing his omissions may seem to some startling. He does not emphasize what to many of us may seem supremely important. Certainly he would have formed with

For instance, to the saints of the early church righteousness of belief was of tremendous importance. Jude is not the only one of the New Testament writers who continued earnestly for the faith. They certainly set a high premium on what we would call orthodoxy. They know also and preached with conviction on the necessity of right living. The problem faced by our many denominations had not arisen then, but had they lived in our day, I am quite sure they would have had nothing to say of the supreme worth of one denomination as against another, and the worthlessness of another. Most of us have lived long enough to discover that among the most elite churches there are a few rascals among the most unpromising, a few saints, conviction that nobody is quite as deep in the dark as the one who has a corner on the light.

Now while all these are important, they are not of supreme importance. Then what is? Here is Simon's answer, "Above all hold unfailing your love for one another". That answer would be vastly impressive if it had been given by Simon alone. But such is not the case. It is the very heart and center of the New Testament.

Simon had a friend whom he had known for long years. They had walked the ways of Galilee together. They differed in temperament. Simon was rather an intense man, but John was more so. He was a Son of Thunder.
In the early days of his discipleship, he had been a fanatic. He was eager to burn the inhabitants of a little ignorant Samaritan village for no greater crime than for having refused his master and his friends a night's lodging. But in the fellowship of his Lord, he was greatly changed. He became a man whose very name today is a synonym for love. The theme of his preaching was just this, "Little children, love one another".

As with Simon, so with John, love came first. It was that without which there could be no life, no knowledge of God. He who does not love does not know God; for knoweth not God. For God is love. It was the sure mark of a new birth, because we love the brethren.

We know that we have passed out of death into life. How do we know? He gives no secondary reason. He gives one and one early. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren.

Love then is that which there can be no salvation. It is that with which there can be no condemnation.

There was a third man far different from both of these. He was an intellectual aristocrat. He was a scholar and a thinker. But in the matter of the supremacy of love he saw eye to eye with his fellow apostles. "Covet earnestly the best gift", he urges. Then he tells us that that best gift is love. "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love". Love is something of such tremendous importance that nothing arrives without it. Giving to the point of utter poverty, even to the point of death falls short without love. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, I am nothing".

Just as nothing however great arrives without love, even the least is enough with it. When the poor widow dropped her pitiful pittance into the offering, that which changed it from a thing of contempt into one of immortal beauty was that with her small gift of things went her great gift of love. Of course the love that is here meant is the love that yearns to give, yearns to help, is the outgoing of an aggressive sacrificial good-will.
Now how did these three great saints come to be in such complete harmony? They were in tune with each other because they were in tune with their Lord. They learned to put love first because he put it first. When a certain lawyer asked him for the greatest commandment, he answered, "You shall love". When in the upper room he gave to his friends the one sure mark of discipleship, he did it in this fashion. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one another". When therefore Simon urges "Above all hold unfailing your love for one another" he is urging the supreme essential of the Christian faith.

Part II

Now this love makes a difference. It makes a supreme difference. God cannot hide springtime in the heart of that rugged apple tree and trust that tree to keep it a secret. It proclaims it to the world in tender blossoms of beauty and at last in delicious fruit. Even so, when love comes into our hearts it creates a new atmosphere. It leads to an infinite variety of helpfulness. Simon here tells of one of its results. For "Above hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins".

"Love covers a multitude of sins--what does Simon mean? Whose sins does love cover? Does it cover the sins of the sinner or does it cover the sins of the lover? Many equally saintly and scholarly men have argued this question. Personally I am sure that Simon meant the latter. The fact that Simon meant the latter does not change the fact that love covers a multitude of sins of the lover. But strictly speaking the question is not an either-or question. It is both. I think that love covers the sins both of the sinner and the lover.

First, it covers the sins of the sinner. This is does not by being blind. It does it rather by looking for the best instead of for the worst. Love is never a fault-finder. The chap that saw the mote in his brother's eye was searching for it or he never would have seen it.
Love in looking for the best instead of the worst overlooks what a more critical eye would see.

Not only so, but love often fails to see a piece of conduct as wrong that might be regarded as wrong by the fault-finder. For instance, so far as we know, Jesus never refused an invitation to dinner. Thus he was sometimes among highly respectable people, sometimes among outcasts. The Scribes and Pharisees resented that. It is a proof of goodness, but of the opposite. It showed him to be a glutton and a lover of bad company. But to those who were friends of Jesus, such conduct was a great cause of inspiration and hope. He always went to dinner when asked because he loved people. He associated with outcasts because he believed that the more dangerous, the illness the greater the need for a physician. As a pastor I discovered that in the eyes of certain of my friends everything I did was right. In the eyes of a few of them everything was wrong. It was not a difference in the deed, but a difference in the seeing-eye.

Second, then love hides a multitude of sins by viewing them with understanding, by making allowances. It has been said that to know all is to forgive all. That is not quite true. But how often a bit of ugly conduct has all but lost its ugliness when we came fully to understand it. Years ago I went to see a man who had had a terrible fall. When I entered the room he turned his tortured face toward mine and said, "Wait a minute." Before you tell me what you think, you can say nothing to me as hard as I have already said to myself. I have fallen and without excuse. You can not say I was wrong. You see that. But what you cannot see is the hard torturing fight I put up before I fell. Remember that I hate the thing that I did. I had to forget the rebuke that I was about to utter as I mingled my tears with his.

Third, love covers a multitude of sins for the sinner because of our willingness to share these sins and to take upon ourselves a part of the responsibility. Where was God when my son was killed? Where was God when my son was killed?" "Just where he was when his own son was killed," came the wise answer."
was in the midst of it suffering with and for the sinner and seeking to change the evil into good."

But how the fact that love covers a multitude of the sins of the sinner doesn't mean that the lover is morally color blind. One day somescribes and pharisees brought flung an ugly lit of wreckage at the feet of Jesus. She had been taken in the very act of shame. These pious upholders of the law were outraged. They were eager to stone her to death at once.

Being so pure they could not endure such gross impurity. But Jesus did not share their attitude. He pitied and for gave, saying, "Go and sin no more". Why? Because he was more sinful than these blood-thirsty men! No! He did it because he was sinless.

2. Sin covers a multitude of the sins of the lover. That may sound a bit unorthodox. It may sound as if we are saved by love instead of by faith. Well! Though we are not saved by love, we are certainly not saved without it. It is said of the believing demons that they trembled. I have seen a few other believers that also trembled, but mainly with rage.

It is hard to see how they will fit into heaven. It is equally hard to see how a real lover would fit into hell. If that woman of whom Jesus said "She loved much", would have put in her appearance in the bottomless pit the Devil would have to seek a more convenient height. How right was he who said, "Better that error live than love should die."

(1). Love covers a multitude of the sins of the lover because it has a constant attitude of forgiveness. How do we receive forgiveness?

By being willing to forgive. It is the Master himself who emphasizes this truth above all others. "When you stand praying, forgive if you have ought against any, that your father in heaven may forgive you". He is eager to forgive, but it is impossible for God to forgive the unforgiving. It was Simon himself who asked the question that brought from Jesus the answer that he was to forgive seventy times seven.

forgiveness

That is must be flowing from our hearts as constantly as waters from a gushing spring. It is love and love alone that makes this possible.
Finally, love covers a multitude of the sins of the lover because God takes the will for the deed. Even we, do that. Something that is worthless or even ugly is changed into the worthful and beautiful because we see the beautiful motive back of it. Years ago I was talking to a mother in her country home when the conversation was interrupted by a little chap, deliciously dirty, who came in from the yard proudly telling his mother, "I brought you a bouquet." But I could see no bouquet at all. When he opened his soiled hand there in the middle of his palm was one withered dog-fennel blossom.

It certainly didn't look like a gift that one would shout over to me. But the mother saw the beautiful motive behind it. Therefore she gathered the little chap into her arms, kissed his soiled face and kissed his soiled fist. As she did this, that little, old dog-fennel blossom bloomed before my very eyes into an American Beauty rose.

At his best David was a great saint. At his worst he was a terrible sinner. Therefore when he proposed to build a temple to his Lord, his hands were too bloody for such a high task. Yet his willingness did not go for nothing. "Whereas it is in thine heart to build me a house, thou didst well that it was in thine heart." Even so our best service is often flawed and shot through with failure. But God said, "Whereas it was in thy heart for loves sake to do me a faultless service, thou didst well however thou shot it, and may we have failure then that it was in thine heart." God takes the will for the deed because love covers a multitude of faults.

Now since love is a supreme essential, how are we to get hold of it? That is certainly an important question. Perhaps we are accustomed to thinking of the unl0ved man as about the most pitiful in all the world. When a certain Psalmist declared that no man cared for his soul, we feel he has reached about the hottest of all hells. I read a bit of a note written by a suicide giving his reasons for quitting before the whistle blew. He declared, "Nobody cares about me. It doesn't matter to anybody
whether I love or die". No wonder he threw his life away.

But if the unloved man is pitiable, the man that loves nobody is more pitiable still. Iago who loves nobody but himself doesn't have to go to hell, he is already there. Of all the privileges we have there is none higher than the privilege of loving. A mother who had lost her son said to me frantically, "I am afraid I loved him too well". "Oh, no", I said, "nobody ever loved anybody too well. You may have loved God too little". In the matter of loving you can let yourself go for the more you love the more like God you become.

How then, I repeat, can we love? The first suggestion I have to offer is this--practice the love you have. Or if you fancy that you have none at all, then act as if you did. You can act with courtesy until courtesy becomes a habit. You can be kind until kindness becomes at least a bit more native to you. To constantly act as if you cared is almost surely to come to care.

This is the case for at least two reasons. We love those institutions and persons for whom we sacrifice. I am thinking of one of the greatest churchmen I ever knew. He loved his church as he loved his home. How had it come about. Not through neglect. But through his investment of thought and time and prayer, month after month and year after year.

Here is a mother who has reared a large family of children. All are upright and Christian except one. He is a renegade. He has brought to that saintly mother nothing but heartache. When I buried him, though my heart bled for that mother, I could find no true word of comfort, even though I did not think it was true. She seemed to love him better than any other child, not because he was lovable, but because she had invested so much in him. When her Treasury of prayers and love had gone when there was no more love to give that child, no more love to give.

Then we act as if we love, we are likely to come to care because of the change such conduct works in the one on whom we bestow our kindness. I knew a minister years ago whom I regarded with
huge disapproval. But one day that man came and asked me for a favor. A previous engagement made it impossible for me to grant his request. He kept coming 'til by and by I said to myself, "I believe he really likes me".

So what? I began to like him. A person may be quite mean and grouchy at another. I have yet to find a man who can be altogether indifferent to any man if he is convinced that that man really cares for him. That works with the constancy of an echo. I used to talk to a cliff across the river from where I was plowing. I found that I could get commendation or condemnation from that cliff because what I gave, it gave back. And there is an echo as there is in nature, that is in you. Converse and there will come in human hearts. One way to love is to begin by acting it.

Second, think on the love of others for you. Above all else, think on the love of God. Now the fact that God loves us has become about the most commonplace assertion that we can make. Nothing is easier to affirm. Yet truly to realize it, in all circumstances is often immeasurably difficult.

I think that great saint was right who affirmed that many times nothing is harder to believe than the fact that God loves you. But if we do really first believe this the inevitable happens. "We love him because he loved us". "He loved me and gave himself up for me." Convinced of that, Saul had to love in return, and so loving, he gave himself to Jesus.

Third, this brings us to the supreme and final secret of loving. Here is another word from Simon, "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth, for sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart". That is by surrendering to Jesus. Not a wounding miracle, this place in the heart comes to those who in Christ we are reborn. Being reborn, we love.}

Many years ago two traveling preachers were entrusted to a Roman jailer. Those men were bad in a pitiful plight. They just passed through a hard and humiliating ordeal. They had been beaten, whipped, Their clothing had been torn from their bodies. This made the ghastly wounds on their backs visible to every seeing eye. They were perhaps hungry and thirsty. But the jailer was not impressed to the slightest degree. He simply obeyed orders by putting them into the inner prison and making
their feet fast in the stocks.

But during the night something happened. Those queer men, instead of groaning, began to sing. Theirs was an amazing service, shot through with the power of God. The prison doors were opened. More amazing still the heart of this Roman jailer was opened. "What must I do to be saved", he questioned in terror. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved", came the answer. And then and there, he believed.

Then what? He saw what he had not seen before. He cared where he had not cared before. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. He did this spontaneously, gladly, because he cared.

The surest of all sure ways of loving is to let into your heart him whose nature and whose name is love.
Making Success a Certainty

Therefore, those who suffer by the will of God must entrust their souls to a Creator who is faithful, and must continue to do what is right. (Goodspeed) I Peter 4:19

Continue to do what is right. Here is a man who can speak with authority on the importance of keeping on. He has been traveling the Christian way for a long time. As he looks back over that road most of it is brilliant with sunshine. But here and there it is flecked with black shadows. Simon has had a kind of genius for falling. He has lost quite a few battles. But now with victory in his voice and the light of triumph on his face he shouts this word to his fellow Christians and to us, "Continue to do what is right". If he has had a genius for falling, he has had an equal genius for beginning again. With a British-like stubbornness he is determined to win the last battle. Knowing that if he wins the last he will win the war. Therefore he is sharing his hard-earned wisdom with us as he urges, "Continue to do what is right".

Obedience to this wise word will make victory in Christian living an absolute certainty. There is only one major danger--and that is--the danger of quitting. Paul is voicing the same conviction in those wise words to the Galatians, "Let us not be weary in well-doing. For in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Notice the one condition--we shall reap if--if what? Not if everybody does his part. That day perhaps will never come. Not if we have world peace. Not if we have a proper economic setup. Not if we have a warm-hearted church and a consecrated minister. There is only one deadly danger--that we quit, that we faint.
Naturally we all know what it is to faint. Some of us have fainted ourselves. We have all seen someone of our fellows faint. Sometime ago in a crowded church I saw a gentleman keel over as he might have done had someone stabbed him in the back. But he was not dead. He had just fainted. He had not become antagonistic to the service of which he was a part. He had simply ceased to count. Not only so, but four men that were making their contribution to the service had to carry him out and administer restoratives. He was not a bad man, but by his fainting he had become a part of the problem rather than the answer, a liability rather than an asset.

When our president, a few years ago, said we had nothing to fear but fear, I think he was putting it a little too strongly. For me to say that as Christians we have nothing to fear but fainting might be too strong. Yet this surely is a major peril. So true is this that however great our gifts, however high our opportunity, if we fail to follow through no power in earth or heaven can give us victory. On the other hand, however small our abilities, however circumscribed our opportunities, if we refuse to faint, no power on earth or in heaven can rob us of victory.

In saying this I am not affirming that anybody can do anything that he makes up his mind to do. Of course there are many fine tasks beyond my ability however great might be my determination. Yet in the realm of human endeavor, this dogged persistence is of superlative importance. However great our ability we can't win our best prizes unless we carry on. Coleridge had a genius almost equal to that of Shakespeare. Had he written every book that he determined to write he would have left a small library. But failing to follow through, all he left was a handful of glittering fragments.

As the most gifted fall short if they faint, even so the most ordinary can win amazing victories if they persist. I am thinking with honor and appreciation of a schoolmate who had one firm ambition.
He was determined to be a physician. As those who knew him best learned this they shook their heads sadly, for my friend was far from being a genius. He was not as bright as a badly smoked lamp chimney. His head seemed more impregnable as MAMMAL than GILBERTA. His patient teachers, seeing that he could never graduate from high school, finally removed the fence altogether and sent him on his way.

By some means, I have never learned how, he got in to medical school. Here he flunked and flunked and flunked again. But if his professors could not get any knowledge of medicine in his head, neither could they drive out his stubborn determination. At last from utter exhaustion, they gave him his diploma. He came back to his little backwoods village to practice his profession. Here he made a real contribution. He carried so much of sturdy determination in his battle with disease that what he had in his medicine case was of secondary importance. When he went to his reward he was both loved and honored. He had rendered a high service—not because of his ability—but because he refused to quit.

Years ago over in England a school boy on his way home saw a bird's nest high up in a tree. He decided that he must have that nest. So he put down his books and climbed for it. But he fell. He climbed a second time and again he fell. He climbed a third time, again he fell, this time breaking his leg.

Some days later when he had sufficiently recovered to be left alone for awhile, his mother went to the village, urging him to be careful with his wounded leg. When she returned she found to her utter amazement a flushed face boy, back in his chair with a bird's nest in his lap. When she rebuked him, the boy answered, "Mother, I simply cannot begin a thing and then let it alone". This young lad a little later became interested in missions. No wonder therefore when his friend preached a great sermon on mission and desired to dismiss this young chap would not let him. He insisted on organizing a Missionary Society. Not only so, but he went out
a little later as the first representative of that Missionary Society. William Carey
Thus, this young chap, William Carey, became in a sense the Father of Modern Missions.

In the Christian life, nothing can defeat us if we persist. Nothing can bring us victory if we quit. But in spite of this, multitudes do quit. In every city, in every village, in every church there are those who once looked to the heights. There are those who once made a start, but who have now given over. They have fallen into a dead faint.

Part II

What are some of the causes that lead to our quitting? I am going to mention only a few.

1. Some quit because they get their feelings hurt. They get wounded in their pride. Years ago, when I was much younger and I daresay less considerate of the feelings of others, I had as my church school Superintendent a man who in my self-confident opinion was lying like a huge stone across the mouth of the sepulcher where I was trying to raise a Sunday school from the dead. Therefore, in my tactful fashion, I asked him if he would be so kind as to resign. He answered that he would not. That put us even! But I had the last laugh. I failed to nominate him at the end of the year and he was automatically out. So what? At once he took up his marbles and went home. Perhaps I was dead wrong, but that did not make his quitting right.

2. A second reason that causes some to quit is suffering. Simon mentions that here, "Those who suffer by the will of God must entrust their souls to a Creator who is faithful." Some of those to whom Simon was writing were suffering persecution at the hands of the Pagans about them. We do not suffer in the same fashion to-day, yet there are certain positions we can take that are thoroughly Christian that will surely bring persecution, though of a more refined type. The Christian way in every age is in a sense a hard way. It is beset by difficulties. We shrink
I was a witness of what Christ suffered. 1st. Peter 5:1 (Moffatt)

"Were you there?" is the haunting question of a popular Negro spiritual. There is a sense in which we were all there. But Simon was there in the flesh. He was an eye-witness of this supreme crime of history. "I was a witness of what Christ suffered". By this Simon does not claim a full knowledge of all the sufferings of our Lord. He witnessed only the suffering that was physical. In my opinion, while this physical agony was terrible beyond our understanding, it was yet as star-light to sun-light in comparison to his agony of mind and spirit. Though he died from the torture of the cross; in the deepest sense, he died of a broken heart.

Part I

What was Simon's immediate reaction to this tragedy?

At first I am sure that it was one of agony to the point of despair. Of all possible tragedies, this to him certainly seemed the worst. It killed his joy. It broke his heart. It left him in a starless night without any satisfying hope of a dawn.

Simon suffered through this crime because by it he had lost a friend. He had lost a friend whom he had not fully understood, but whom he had deeply loved. Simon blundered many a time. He went wrong in word, in thought, in deed; in fact, in almost every conceivable fashion. But, in my opinion, he never went wholly wrong in his heart, never in his deep devotion to Jesus. Even while he
swore that he did not know him, I feel sure that he still loved him with a love that nothing could kill.

Simon's agony was further increased by the fact that he had not only lost a friend, but he had lost a friend to whom he had not always been entirely loyal. I conducted the funeral of a lovely wife some time ago. Her husband had been devoted, after a fashion, but his devotion had not always made him kind. Now that she had gone he brought an offering of flowers as beautiful as it was lavish. But, knowing his yesterday as I did, I could not get away from the convection that he was seeking to find some relief for his anguish by this vain effort to say to the dead what he knew he should have said to the living. Even so, Simon's sorrow was intensified by the remembrance of his disloyalty to him whom he had loved and lost.

Not only had Simon lost a friend, but he had lost one who was unique. This friend had done far more than take captive his heart. He had also awakened hopes within him that were beyond all price. He had made Simon sure of victory both for himself and for his people. But the cross had put a black period to all that. He now had to say with two of his fellow disciples, "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel". But with that hope dead, all the light had gone from his sky. Indeed because of the brightness that had once shown upon him, his present night was the more black.

But I am sure that what brought Simon's agony to its climax was that this death on the cross seemed, in spite of all that Jesus had taught, so utterly without meaning. In it he could read neither rhyme nor reason. It looked as if God's best gift had been thrown away, that it had been wasted and far worse than wasted. Naturally
this conviction plunged Simon for the moment into a kind of mad world. For him, there was no explanation for such stark tragedy that could possibly explain.

For instance, Simon found it impossible to believe that his Master had been merely a victim of evil forces with which he was unable to cope. This was the case, I am sure because he remembered, at least fitfully, certain affirmations that Jesus had made regarding himself. For instance, Simon had heard him declare that no man was taking his life from him, but that he was laying it down himself. He was also present when Jesus, in the face of what seemed utter weakness, had gone so far as to declare that he could even then summon twelve legions of angels and thus win an easy deliverance.

Then these words were the more impressive because of Jesus' conduct in the face of the cross. Simon saw that his Lord had made no slightest effort to save himself. Indeed the pathetic and futile blow that he himself had struck in his Master's defense had met with rebuke rather than approval. Naturally, therefore, Simon could not explain the death of Jesus in terms of weakness.

If he could not explain the cross in terms of weakness still less could he explain it in terms of ill desert. He was wholly convinced that his Lord had not deserved to die. This conviction, I think, was universal. Certain it is that Jesus impressed all who came into contact with him by his superlative goodness. This was the impression he left upon those who knew him most casually. It was the impression he made upon Claudia, the wife of Pilate,
whose only contact with him had perhaps been through some slave
girl who had stood on the fringe of the crowd and listened to
him preach. It was the impression that he made upon Pilate. In
spite of the fact the Governor would have been glad to have been
convinced of his guilt, he was dead sure of his innocence. It
was also the impression that he made upon the Roman officer whose
duty it was to carry out Pilate's unjust sentence.

This too was the impression that Jesus made upon his enemies.
There was a tight little handful of officials who for selfish
reasons hated him with fiery intensity. They were determined to
be rid of him at all cost. Therefore they searched with keen eyes
for faults that would justify their bloody course. But the worst
that these shrewd enemies could find to say about him that had
any foundation in fact has become a priceless part of our gospel.
This for instance "This man receives sinners."

Emphatically this was the verdict of those who knew him most
intimately. Simon along with others had been with him alone and
in crowds. He had been with him in times of victory and in times
of seeming defeat. He had been with him when friends were kind and
when they were unkind. Having seen him in almost every possible
situation, he had reached this verdict: "He knew no sin". That
such a man should be done to death and that without the slightest
effort to save himself naturally left Simon benumbed, bewildered,
and heartbroken.

Part II

But Simon's black night has now given place to day. How
soon this day dawned we are not now affirming. But that it dawned
is beyond question. Simon has come to see meaning and purpose where once he saw none at all. He has found an explanation of the cross that for him explains. It is quite possible that we may not agree with him. But it is well to remember that no explanation of what took place on Calvary, whether right or wrong, can do away with that tremendous fact. Primitive people used to give some queer and false explanations of the sunrise. But no explanation, however false, could ever prevent the dawn.

One explanation that Simon seems to give is that Jesus suffered to set us an example, "Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." But this is one of the results of our Lord's suffering, rather than its purpose. Simon is writing to people who are being persecuted. Some are suffering slightly, just being shut out of things--receiving the cold shoulder. Others are suffering personal violence. How are they to bear up under this unjust suffering? They are not to be angered by it so as to seek revenge. They are to face their suffering as Christ faced his. "When he was reviled he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten".

But the supreme reason for this death on the cross according to Simon had to do with our sins. "Christ also died for our sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (I Peter 3:18) Simon wrote this letter to churches that had known the ministry of St. Paul. (There have been those who have sought to point out a chasm between the teachings of these two great apostles. But, in my opinion, no such chasm exists.) When these saints who had known Paul's ministry read
this epistle I am sure that they were neither shocked nor perplexed. The writer was saying in his own words what they had heard from their first great teacher. Paul had said, "I delivered unto you as of first importance—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Indeed both Peter and Paul had received this message from their Master who declared that he had come to give his life a ransom for many.

Simon is also in complete harmony with the Master and with Paul when he quotes from Isaiah, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree". I do not take this to mean that Jesus became guilty in our place, no innocent person can in that sense bear the guilt of another. He can suffer because of that guilt. He can pay the penalty for it, but beyond that he cannot go. Had Jesus even on the cross felt himself guilty of sin he would have done what he commands us to do, confessed and asked forgiveness. But here as throughout his life there was no slightest sense of guilt. But he did here by paying the penalty for our sins, put pardon and healing within reach of every man. "By his wounds you have been healed."

Indeed Simon is sure that in the death of our Lord, we also died, at least potentially. This he affirms more than once. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness". (I Peter 2:24) "Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live—by the will of God (I Peter 4:1-2). Here again he is in
agreement with Paul, who affirmed, "We are convinced that one has
died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor. 5:14). With Paul
as I am sure also with Simon, this death was intensely personal.
"I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20)—"For be it from
me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which--
I have been crucified to the world." (Gal 6:14)

But we need to bear in mind that the purpose of our crucifixion
with Christ is not negative, but positive; not death, but life.
According to Simon we die to sin in order to live to righteousness.
"Whoever has suffered," he affirms, "has ceased from sin so as to
live—by the will of God." Paul voices the same conviction again
and again. When, therefore, he declares that he has been crucified
with Christ he hastens to affirm that he is not for that reason
one of the dead. On the contrary he is more thrillingly alive than
ever before. Thus out of their own experiences these two great
apostles affirm that through the death and rising of Jesus they
are living the resurrection life in the here and now. Both affirm
in their own language "The old has passed away; behold, the new
has come."

Part III

Now Simon is sure that the joyous transformation that has
come to him through the passion of our Lord may be shared by all.
This is not the case because such transformation is inevitable.
Simon witnessed what Christ suffered and was remade. That was true
also of another Simon, a black man from Africa who was on Calvary
that Friday. But it was not true of all. Many witnessed
this suffering, shrugged their shoulders and went their heedless way as unmoved as if they had witnessed the death of an ordinary criminal.

How incredible as it may seem, such a possibility faces us. An ancient and anguished prophet stood amidst the ruins of all that he had loved and shouted to a crowd that seemed utterly unmoved by his tragedy, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?" We might well put that same question to our own sluggish souls as again we face Calvary. Here we see God's mightiest act on our behalf, his supreme appeal. Is it nothing to you, naked nothing? If such is the case, then as far as you are concerned there is nothing more that God can do. Beyond this love, not even infinite love can go.

It is an appalling fact that though love is the mightest power in the world it can be defeated. Though it can win where all else fails, yet its triumph is not always an assured certainty. This it would seem is true even of divine love. It is surely true of love that is only human. If ever mortal man gave love a chance to win, surely that man was the gifted young prophet Hosea. His devotion to his wayward wife Gomer was so deep and abiding as to seem incredible. Yet of the final victory of that devotion we cannot be sure.

Look at some of the storms that this prophet's love had to encounter. Soon after his mirage, he had to realize that the woman to whom he had given his all had no sympathy for what was the supreme passion of his life, the calling of his nation back to God. There were petty quarrels that soon grew larger and more
prolonged—and stormy. There were brief hours of reconciliation when Gomea would weep tears of shallow penitence upon his shoulder, only to be followed by days and nights of estrangement as she went back to her old sound ways.

Then something happened that brought this tortured husband hope. A boy baby was born. Surely Hosea felt that this new life that he and Gomea had shared with God in creating would put an innocent hand on each of their hearts and pull them closer together. But here again the prophet was disappointed. Gomea did not become more devoted, but more wayward. When two other babies came Hosea gave them names that indicated that though they were hers they were not his.

At last she seemed to do him one small favor. She relieved him of her company altogether and ran away with another man. Then fell the final blow. This knight who without too much effort, had lured her from her home sold her as a slave. Lower than that no woman could go. Surely there was nothing for this shamed husband to do but dust her off his hands and forget. But it was his will that though forgotten, he couldn't forget. Thus the impossible happened—he went into the slave market, paid the required price and brought her home.

Then what? Here we have to drop the curtain. Frankly we do not know. Perhaps Gomea softened under the warmth of such unbelievable love and became a good woman. Similar miracles have happened. It was to another outcast that Jesus centuries later paid a most beautiful tribute. He declared that having been
greatly forgiven she has come greatly to love. This could have been the case with Gomer.

But there is another possibility. She may have felt less at home with her husband and children than she was in the brothel. She may have resisted all efforts to win her confidence and loyalty. She may have regarded the devotion of the one man who loved her with cynical contempt. This might have been the case because love, even at its best, can be defeated. That is true even of the love of God. It is certainly true of the love of man.

"I was a witness of what Christ suffered", wrote Simon years after the event. As he writes there is a song in his heart and a light in his face that never was ever seen on land or sea. "I was a witness of the suffering of Christ, for that I shall thank God throughout all time and throughout eternity." This was the case because Simon accepted God's unspeakable gift. Every gift involves two. There must be a giver and there must also be a receiver. If we refuse to receive, then this priceless gift, so far as we are concerned, goes for nothing. But if we have faith to receive then we come increasingly to die unto self and to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Present On Calvary

I was a witness of what Christ suffered. I Peter 5:1 (Moffatt)

"Were you there?" is the haunting question of a popular Negro spiritual. There is a sense in which we were all there. But Simon was there in the flesh. He was an eye-witness of this supreme crime of history. "I was a witness of what Christ suffered". By this Simon does not claim a full knowledge of all the sufferings of our Lord. He witnessed only the suffering that was physical. In my opinion, while this physical agony was terrible beyond our understanding, it was yet as star-light to sun-light in comparison to his agony of mind and spirit. Though he died from the torture of the cross; in the deepest sense, he died of a broken heart.

Part I

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Simon's agony was further increased by the fact that he had not only lost a friend, but he had lost a friend to whom he had not always been entirely loyal. I conducted the funeral of a lovely wife some time ago. Her husband had been devoted, after a fashion, but his devotion had not always made him kind. Now that she had gone he brought an offering of flowers as beautiful as it was lavish. But, knowing his yesterday as I did, I could not get away from the conception that he was seeking to find some relief for his anguish by this vain effort to say to the dead what he knew he should have said to the living. Even so, Simon's sorrow was intensified by the remembrance of his disloyalty to him whom he had loved and lost.

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world. For him, there was no explanation for such stark tragedy that could possibly explain.

For instance, Simon found it impossible to believe that his Master had been merely a victim of evil forces with which he was unable to cope. This was the case in spite of the fact that he failed to remember that Jesus had declared that no man was taking his life from him, but that he was laying down himself. But even if he forgot Jesus' words he could not forget his conduct as he confronted the cross. That his Lord had made no slightest effort to save himself was to Simon a certainty. Indeed the pathetic and futile blow that he himself had struck in his Master's defense had met with rebuke rather than approval. Naturally, therefore, Simon could not explain the death of Jesus in terms of weakness.

If he could not explain the cross in terms of weakness still less could he explain it in terms of ill desert. He was wholly convinced that his Lord had not deserved to die. This conviction, I think, was universal. Certain it is that Jesus impressed all who came into contact with him by his superlative goodness. This was the impression he left upon those who knew him most casually. It was the impression he made upon Claudia, the wife of Pilate, whose only contact with him had perhaps been through some slave girl who had stood on the fringe of the crowd and listened to his preach. It was the impression that he made upon Pilate. In spite of the fact the Governor would have been glad to have been convinced of his guilt, he was sure of his innocence. It was also the impression that he made upon the Roman officer whose duty it
was to carry out Pilate's unjust sentence.

This too was the impression that Jesus made upon his enemies. There was a tight little handful of officials who for selfish reasons hated him with fiery intensity. They were determined to be rid of him at all cost. Therefore they searched with keen eyes for faults that would justify their bloody course. But the worst that these shrewd enemies could find to say about him that had any foundation in fact has become a priceless part of our gospel. This for instance "This man receives sinners."

Emphatically this was the verdict of those who knew him most intimately. Simon along with others had been with him alone and in crowds. He had been with him in times of victory and in times of seeming defeat. He had been with him when friends were kind and when they were unkind. Having seen him in almost every possible situation, he had reached this verdict: "He knew no sin". That such a man should be done to death and that without the slightest effort to save himself naturally left Simon benumbed, bewildered, and heartbroken.

Part II

But Simon's black night has now given place to day. How soon this day dawned we are not now affirming. But that it dawned is beyond question. Simon has come to see meaning and purpose where once he saw none at all. He has found an explanation of the cross that for him explains. It is quite possible that we may not agree with him. But it is well to remember that no explanation of what took place on Calvary, whether right or wrong, can do away with that tremendous fact. Primitive people used to give some queer
and false explanations of the sunrise. But no explanation, however false, could ever prevent the dawn.

One explanation that Simon seems to give is that Jesus suffered to set us an example, "Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." But this is one of the results of our Lord's suffering, rather than its purpose. Simon is writing to people who are being persecuted. Some are suffering slightly, just being shut out of things—receiving the cold shoulder. Others are suffering personal violence. How are they to bear up under this unjust suffering? They are not to be angered by it so as to seek revenge. They are to face their suffering as Christ faced his. "When he was reviled he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten".

But the supreme reason for this death on the cross according to Simon had to do with our sins. "Christ also died for our sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." (I Peter 3:18) Simon wrote this letter to churches that had known the ministry of St. Paul. But when these early saints read this epistle I am sure that they were neither shocked nor perplexed. The writer was saying in his own words what they had heard from their first great teacher. Paul had said, "I delivered unto you as of first importance—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Indeed both Peter and Paul had received this message from their Master who declared that he had come to give his life a ransom for many.

Simon is also in complete harmony with the Master and with Paul when he quotes from Isaiah, "He himself bore our sins in his body on
the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. (I Peter 2:24) "Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live--by the will of God (I Peter 4:1-2). Here again he is in agreement with Paul, who affirmed, "We are convinced that one had died for all; therefore all have died" (2 Cor. 5:14). With Paul as I am sure also with Simon, this death was intensely personal. "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20)---"For be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which--I have been crucified to the world." (Gal 6:14)

But we need to bear in mind that the purpose of our crucifixion with Christ is not negative, but positive; not death, but life. According to Simon we die to sin in order to live to righteousness. "Whoever has suffered," he affirms, "has ceased from sin so as to live--by the will of God." Paul voices the same conviction again and again. When, therefore, he declares that he has been crucified with Christ he hastens to affirm that he is not for that reason one of the dead. On the contrary he is more thrillingly alive than ever before. Thus out of their own experiences these two great apostles affirm that through the death and rising of Jesus they are living the resurrection life in the here and now. Both affirm in their own language "The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Part III

Now Simon is sure that the joyous transformation that has come to him through the passion of our Lord may be shared by all. This is not the case because such transformation is inevitable. Simon witnessed what Christ suffered and was raised. That was true also of another Simon, a black man from Africa, who was on Calvary that
fateful Friday. But it was not true of all. Many witnessed this suffering, shrugged their shoulders and went their heedless way as if they had witnessed the death of an ordinary criminal.

Now incredible as it may seem, such a possibility faces us. An ancient and anguished prophet stood amidst the ruins of all that he had loved and shouted to a crowd that seemed utterly unmoved by his tragedy, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?" We might well put that same question to our own sluggish souls as again we face Calvary. Here we see God's mightiest act on our behalf, his supreme appeal. Is it nothing to you, naked nothing? If such is the case, then as far as you are concerned there is nothing more that God can do. Beyond this, love, not even infinite love can go.

It is an appalling fact that though love is the mightiest power in the world it can be defeated. Though it can win where all else fails, yet its triumph is not always an assured certainty. This it would seem is true even of divine love. It is surely true of love that is only human. If ever mortal man gave love a chance to win, surely that man was the gifted young prophet Hosea. His devotion to his wayward wife Gomer was so deep and abiding as to seem incredible. Yet of the final victory of that devotion we cannot be sure.

Soon after his marriage this young prophet had to realize that the woman to whom he had given his all had no sympathy for what was the supreme passion of his life, the calling of his nation back to God. There were petty quarrels that soon became more stormy and prolonged. There were brief hours of reconciliation when Gomer would weep tears of shallow penitence upon his shoulder, only to be followed by days and nights of estrangement as she went back to her
shameful and sordid ways.

Then something happened that brought this husband hope. A boy baby was born. This little chap in whose creation he and Gomer had shared with God would surely make a difference. He would put an innocent hand on each of their hearts and draw them closer together. But here again the prophet was disappointed. Gomer did not become more devoted, but more wayward. A few years later when two other babies had come Hosea gave them names that indicated that though they were hers they were not his.

At last she seemed to do him one small favor. She relieved him of her company altogether and ran away with another man. Then fell the final blow. This Knight who without too much effort, had lured her from her home sold her as a slave. Lower than that no woman could go. Surely there was nothing for this shamed husband to do, but dust her off his hands and forget. But it was his hell that though forgotten, he couldn't forget. Thus the impossible happened—he went into the slave market, paid the required price and brought her home.

Then what? Here we have to drop the curtain. Frankly we do not know. Perhaps Gomer softened under the warmth of such unbelievable love and became a good woman. Similar miracles have happened. It was to another outcast that Jesus centuries later paid a most beautiful tribute. He declared that having been greatly forgiven she has come greatly to love. This could have been the case with Gomer.

But there is another possibility. She may have felt less at
home with her husband and children than she had been in the brothel. She may have resisted all efforts to win her confidence and loyalty. She may have regarded the devotion of her husband with cynical contempt. This might have been the case because love, even at its best, can be defeated. That is true it seems even of the love of God. It is certainly true of the love of man.

"I was a witness of what Christ suffered", wrote Simon years after the event. As he writes there is a song in his heart and a light in his face that never was ever seen on land or sea. "I was a witness of the suffering of Christ, for that I shall thank God throughout all time and throughout eternity." This was the case because Simon accepted God's unspeakable gift. Every gift involves two. There must be a giver and there must also be a receiver. If we refuse to receive, then this priceless gift, so far as we are concerned, goes for nothing. But if we have faith to receive then we come increasingly to die unto self and to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.
By Sylvanus... a faithful brother, I have written briefly. I Peter 5:12

Here it would seem we have a kind of postscript from the hand of Simon such as Paul often added to his letters after he had dictated them to a secretary. This Sylvanus is no doubt the Silas whom we meet on the pages of Acts and of the Epistles of Paul. He is here serving as secretary to Simon Peter who was more skillful in handling a net or an oar than a pen. Later he will carry this letter to the churches to which it is addressed. Later still he will place this same letter in our hands. Thus his seemingly insignificant task will help to enrich the church throughout the centuries.

Part I

What do we know of the career of Silas?

1. Luke tells us that he was a leader in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:27). As a result of his position he was doubtless privileged to take part in that important council that decided that Christianity should be a world religion instead of just another Jewish sect. There is no doubt that Silas on this occasion voted with the liberals.

These seasoned saints having reached their decision under divine guidance, being able to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us", at once sent their findings to the perplexed congregation in Antioch. For the bearing of this message they chose two men, one of whom was this man Silas. We may be sure that both he and his companion endorsed the content of the letter they were sent to deliver.
But their duties did not end when they had put this document into the hands of the church at Antioch. They were further to explain and enforce its content. Both these men were prophets. Phillips translates the word "inspired preachers". Silas, therefore, with his friend so preached according to the record as to encourage and strengthen the church.

2. A second fact we know about Silas is that he was Paul's chosen companion and co-worker for his second missionary journey. The necessity for a new partner was brought about by an unfortunate difference that arose between Paul and his former co-worker, Barnabas. When Paul suggested to this dear and devoted friend that they make a second adventure, Barnabas heartedly agreed. But he made one condition: He would go provided John Mark could go with them.

To this proposal Paul strongly objected. He felt that this one-time deserter would be more of a hinderance than a help. Therefore, he flatly refused to take him. This does not mean that Paul was resentful. He no doubt loved John Mark tenderly. Remember this seemingly harsh preacher had the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians in his heart. Even so he felt that he must put the cause of his Lord above all else.

But Barnabas, son of encouragement, friend and kinsman of Mark, was equally strong in his determination. He felt that he must stand by this former failure who was even now smarting from the shame of his recent collapse. He may have felt that for him to turn him down might work his utter ruin. Therefore he broke with Paul and went with Mark to Cyprus.

To take his place Paul chose Silas. Through their working together, he had come to know this man and through him had also come to trust him. Thus Silas received a great promotion, not by
seeking it but rather by being over the position he had. Through doing his task well, he was given one that was larger and more thrilling. Not only so, but he had the privilege of becoming an intimate friend of one of the most tremendous personalities of that day and all days. He was a friend of Paul the missionary, of Paul the scholar from whose coat sleeve one might have brushed enough learning to have made him a Master of Arts. He was a friend of Paul the saint who could say, "For to me to live is Christ!"

He began his mission by visiting with Paul certain churches that Paul, himself, had founded. Then it became his great privilege to be a part of that immortal little army that was first to invade Europe with the Gospel. He was with Paul at Philippi. He was in that service by the river side when the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. He, with his friend, shared the hospitality of Lydia's home. He heard with Paul the cries of that poor girl, an enslaved fortune teller, who cried after them: "These men are the servants of the Most High God". When Paul, by curing her, got into trouble, Silas shared that trouble. He as well as Paul was beaten with rods. He along with his friend was thrust into prison where the feet of both were made fast in stocks.

Here then is a man, once a leader in the Jerusalem church, who became a co-worker with Saint Paul. Having been released from the jail of Philippi because they were both Roman citizens, they went together to Thessalonica. Here they labored so successfully, they were soon forced to leave the city. Their next stop was Berea where they met with greater success. But Silas, being the less aggressive, was allowed a longer stay than his friend. Paul was soon driven out, going first to Corinth. Here we see these two together for the last time. After this mission at Corinth, Silas drops out of the story.
When we meet Silas again he is in Rome. We know nothing of how he came to that great city or of how much he accomplished while there. We may be sure that it was nothing outstanding. At least the one brief glimpse we get of him is as secretary to Simon Peter. He is now associated with the Apostle to the Jews somewhat as he had once been associated with the Apostle to the Gentiles. His was a subordinate position as would be the case of almost any man privileged to stand beside two such greats.

Part II

What does his career tell of the character of Silas?

1. He was willing to work at any task whether great or small. He seems never to have been a leader after leaving Jerusalem. This perhaps, as hinted above, grew out of the fact that he had become associated with such great men. But when he lost his place of leadership he did not lose his interest. Years ago I met with a group of ministers of all denominations about a table to draft a letter to the governor of our state on a matter which we considered important. The oldest man of the group said, "Dr. A, we will ask you to act as chairman and Dr. B as secretary". At once Dr. B threw down his pencil, drew back his chair and stalked toward the door saying, "I'll have nothing to do with it". We all sat in embarrassment and utter silence. To this day I do not know why Dr. B acted as he did. But I have a wicked guess that it was because he was not made chairman. Silas did not have to be chairman.

This was the case I am sure because he was a man of beautiful humility. Then perhaps he was wise enough to know that God's judgment of what is big is not always the same as ours. As I listened to wise reporters tell the ten greatest events of 1958, I was impressed, but not wholly convinced. Had we had such reports in the long ago, I wondered how that birth in the stable at Bethlehem would have
been rated. What rating would we give to the two mites of the widow? Silas, with an eye to the will of God, did his small task gladly. His one big question was, "Where can I serve?" not "Where can I shine?"

2. Silas was not only humbly willing to work at any task but with anybody who was seeking to make Jesus king. A few years ago certain scholars sought to point out a wide chasm between Paul and Peter. Of course no such chasm really existed. They preached the same gospel but to different congregations. Paul addressed himself mainly to the Gentiles, Peter to the Jews. But this did not make them in the least antagonistic. On a certain occasion when Paul rebuked Simon to his face, I think his temporary lapse was due far more to his almost superstitious awe of James as the brother of his Lord than to any return to his Jewish narrowness.

Silas I am sure was completely in sympathy with the liberal views of Paul. This was doubtless true in little less degree of Simon. Yet had one been an out-and-out liberal and the other a conservative, I think Silas would still have been able to have worked with them. He was more interested in the fundamentals that bind men together than the trivialities that drive them apart. May his tribe increase! He was a brother, not simply in name but in reality.

It is distressing that certain earnest men who yesterday could find nothing too good to say about Billy Graham, can today equally find nothing too ugly to say about him. What has happened? Has this saintly evangelist gone over to the enemy? Has he torn to shreds his hidden credentials and become a minister of the gospel without the grace of God? Has he lost all power to call sinners to repentance? Not a bit of it. He has simply become more tolerant, more Christlike in his attitude toward his brethren.

I was present some years ago at a Bible Conference made up of both liberals and conservatives. Among the invited speakers was the
distinguished gentleman from London. There was also another equally
earnest who was extremely conservative. This conservative so stren-
ously objected to his liberal brother that he informed the manager of
the conference that he would not appear on the same platform with
him. Of course this occasioned the manager, a genuine saint and a
close personal friend of mine, real embarrassment.

As a zealous peace maker he wrote out a brief confession of
faith that met with the approval of the conservative. He then pre-

sented this to the other minister, explaining his predicament and
asking if he would be willing to sign. "Yes", came the prompt reply,
"I will sign for two reasons. First, I really believe what you have
written. Second, I want to save you any embarrassment." I am
sure Silas also would have signed. He was willing to work anywhere.
He was willing to work with anybody who was seeking "to heal the
world's open sore."

3. Not only was Silas ready to work at any task with anybody,
but he was willing to work at any cost. He was willing to work when
things were running well, when the sea was smooth. He was also willing
to work when things got difficult and his sea was whipped into a rage.
When Paul chose him he felt that he had a man who was no parlor soldier,
but who would stand up however great the odds.

Silas did not disappoint him. When Paul had his clothing torn
from him, Silas lost his shirt, too. When Paul was whipped publicly,
Silas dared to share his pain and shame. When Paul changed his prison into a sanctuary where he prayed and sang to God,
Silas did not compel him to sing a solo. He joined his voice with
that of his great friend. Silas was humble-hearted. He was brotherly
and liberal in the finest sense of the word. He was courageous.

4. Silas was faithful. That is the one single adjective that is
It is a brief description, but is really enough. Being willing to work at any task however small, with anybody who would share Christ's mission, at any cost—there was no other word that would adequately describe him. His conduct was that of a faithful man. Indeed his faithfulness was the fountain from which all the loveliness of his life flowed.

Part III

Now I confess that Silas gives me a lift. He was neither a pigmy nor a giant. He was just an ordinary man who became extraordinary through his faithfulness to God and man. He had that priceless flower which the Heavenly Gardener makes to grow in every dedicated heart. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience... faithfulness." Being faithful he was possessed of that without which gifts to the point of genius fall short, but with which the most mediocre reach radiant victory. And the heartening fact is that this prize is within reach of every one of us regardless of our gifts.

Since this is true we are all on an equal footing. The man of vast ability has no slightest advantage over his less able brother. This becomes clear when we remember that Mr. Five Talents did not receive his commendation because he had doubled his capital. He might have multiplied it a hundred fold and still have missed it. On the other hand he might have lost every penny of it and still have received the same commendation if he had done his best. It is not returns, but faithfulness that our Lord is seeking.

If this is heartening it is also very searching. This is especially true for those of superb gifts. When I think of about the most tragic failure I have known among my brethren in the ministry I think of one to whom it seemed God had given almost everything. He was brilliant, magnetic, winsome as springtime. He could do with little
effort what most of us could not do at all. Naturally he made rapid promotion and was honored with the highest position within the gift of his church. Of course he accomplished much, but I am convinced that it was all so many doll rags in comparison with what he might have done had he been truly faithful.

By his bloodless victories he was lured little by little into the easy way. One summer's night I went to hear him preach in a great down-town city church. The people were there. All of them hungry of heart. Some perhaps had come just holding on by their fingertips, hoping that God's minister might say something to enable them to get over the next hill. But instead of preaching he said with fascinating charm, "It is too hot to preach tonight. I am going to tell you a few jokes and let you go." I think the congregation in the main was pleased. But I doubt if this was true of Him who longs to greet us all with "Well done good and faithful servant".

Now since faithfulness is the supreme necessity, it is not surprising that it is the faithful souls who have helped us most whether their talents were few or many. I find it in my heart at this moment to thank God for the faithful men and women of great gifts whom I have been privileged to know along the way. Again and again I have been thrilled and helped by these Pike's Peak personalities whose lofty heads have seemed to catch the first kiss of sunrise and to hold its last lingering caress at eventide.

But I have perhaps been helped more by foothill personalities, obscure men and women, many of whom were hardly known outside their own households. Yet because they were faithful, as they walked their half-hidden ways, they managed to help salt the earth and light the world. Such a man was Silas. Such may be if we share his faithfulness.