SALESMA NSHIP

"Sirs, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

John 4:15

As a study in the highest type of salesmanship I know of nothing in the New Testament or out of it to equal the fourth chapter according to St. John. Since this is a chapter on salesmanship it deals with a matter of which we are vitally interested. Everyone of us has something to sell. I do not use selling in its secular sense. I use it in the sense that life is a matter of give and take. It is a matter of sharing. Of course, there is a conception of salesmanship that thinks only of the profit of the seller. That is typified by the instruction that a father gave to his son. "To sell somebody what he wants— that is nothing. To sell somebody what he does not want— that is business."

The right kind of salesmanship then means an exchange of values of one kind or another to the benefit of all parties concerned. It is only this conception that can redeem business from crass selfishness. Now and then some blind man will say, "I am not in business for my health. I am in it strictly for the money." Such a man is usually slandering himself. If he is telling the truth he is likely to be headed for failure. No man can prosper permanently, even in a material sense, who seeks only his own good. There is no reason why the Christian business man should not be just as high minded and just as unselfish
in the handling of his business as is the physician, the minister, or the mission\- 

er.

But whether we have anything material to sell or not, if we are Christian we have something to share that is of infinite worth. The success of our salesmanship in this particular is the hope of the world. We have that without which the world simply cannot live. Since this is the case it is every man's business to be a salesman. To refuse to do so is to go bankrupt. "My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the work of him that sent me and to finish his work." By which he meant to say that this selling of my gospel is that by which I live. To win others is a way of growth. To fail to do so is a way of death. This type of salesmanship then is every man's duty and every man's privilege. It is also every man's possibility. But that we know the better how to do it let us look at this amazing story.

I.

1. Look at the two parties concerned, the two actors in this thrilling drama. The scene is an old well curb. Upon that well curb a young man is sitting. His face is a striking blending of tenderness and strength. But though he is just in his early thirties there is a bit of droop in his shoulders today. He has been carrying a heavy burden. Then his feet are dusty, for all the morning he has been traveling on foot. Here in the noon day he is sitting waiting presumably for his disciples who have gone into the village to buy food. But in reality he is waiting for somebody else. Waiting for a customer, about the most unpromising that we can imagine.

By and by as he looks across the wistful plain he sees this customer. It is a woman with a water vessel upon her shoulder. Though it is noon day she is coming at this hot hour to draw water. Desem\- and respectable women throng the well in the cool of the day. Of course, that would be the easier time for her,
But though she dreads the hot sun, she dreads it less than she does the hot scorn of her respectable sisters. So these two meet, Jesus a Jewish Rabbi, and this outcast Samaritan woman. It would be impossible to conceive of two people any farther apart.

Had I been present I imagine I might have slipped over beside Jesus and said, "Yonder comes a woman. But do not speak to her. I know a Jewish Rabbi does not speak in the open to a woman of his own race were she ever so respectable. But this woman is a Samaritan. Not only is she a Samaritan, but she is an outcast. She is a woman of a tarnished past. She is quite intelligent it is true, quite witty—beautiful once. But she is tarnished now, fingered by too many hands. Have nothing to do with her. She has walked to this well as through the fetted filth of a moral swamp. She is hard, cynical, and hopeless. She will certainly not be interested in your way of life. She will certainly not care for any of the wares that you have to offer." So I should have thought. But Jesus sets out at once to stir the interest of this impossible customer.

II.

How did he do it?

1. He asked her a favor. That surprised her. She looked him over with hard and critical eyes. "You are evidently a Jew," she said to herself. "Not only a Jew, but a respectable Jew. Why then do you violate every rule by speaking to me in that fashion, and ask me a favor? How is it you ask drink of me when I am a woman of Samaria?" But whatever the reason he had asked. Not only so, but he had asked with evident faith that his request would be granted. That in its awakened her interest in this amazing Stranger.

As a method of winning friends, which is the better—the doing a favor for another, or the asking for a favor at the hands of another? Both ways have been
found effective. Both methods have been found futile. But I am inclined to believe that the asking of favors is often the surer road than the granting of them. It is especially true if the one from whom we ask a favor happens to belong to a class upon which the world looks down. Anybody can receive a favor, but to grant one is something far bigger. The granting of favors gives us an opportunity to do something God-like. It therefore tends to increase our self-respect. I daresay this outcast woman unconsciously began to think better of herself because she was asked for this small gift of a drink of water.

But she does not dare be too proud of being asked for a favor. This is the case because she is suspicious. She has been pushed about by life. She has been disappointed and bruised till she dares not expect anything but the worst. Therefore, she cannot believe that this Stranger is sincere even in his request for a favor. He has some ulterior motive. He is seeking to get some kind of advantage. He is trying to discover some new way of insulting her. Therefore, she resolves not to be taken in. She will let him know that she is just as shrewd as he is. Yes, just as hard-boiled, even beyond what he expects.

With this in mind, she answers, "How is it that thou being a Jew ask drink of me being a woman of Samaria? You know that you and your race despise all Samaritans, even the best of us. You know that your contempt for me knows no bounds. If you had me at a disadvantage you would spit on me with scorn. Now I have you at a disadvantage. You are thirsty. I am able to give you a drink, but I am not going to. I would grant your request if I thought you were making it honestly. But you are not. You are trying only to increase my shame, to make the heavier the burden of my degradation."

No doubt she expected this Stranger to flare up with this. She expected him to grow hot with resentment. But her interest was further deepened by the fact that such was not the case. Instead he gave an answer that filled her with interested amazement, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith
"Salesmanship"

to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." This keen witted woman could not fail to see the deep meaning of what this stranger was saying. He is telling her something about herself that she had perhaps refused to recognize. But now that it was put into words she knew it to be utterly true. What is Jesus telling her?

First, he is telling her that she is not as hard boiled as she thinks.

You have tried to persuade yourself that you are satisfied with life as you are living it. You have tried to tell yourself that the miserable muck through which you are walking is the best possible path that your wayward feet can find. But when you are honest with yourself you know it is not so. A thousand times you have hated yourself for what you are. A thousand times you have looked to the heights and longed to climb. A thousand times you have fluttered against the prison bars that shut you in like a bird caught from the wild. The only reason that you continue to travel your drab road is because you have lost hope. You don't think you can ever be different. But that is where you are wrong. You can.

Suppose Jesus had asked,"Do you ever pray?" I imagine the answer would have been unprintable. She would have perhaps laughed at him scornfully. "No, I never pray, why should I?" What does God care for a woman like me? Those who claim to worship him hate me. Therefore God does too. Then, I am getting on very well as I am." But Jesus knows better. "Perhaps you don't pray any more, but the reason is not that you are content with life as you are living it. But because you have given yourself up. If you thought there was any chance of your ever winning you would pray. If you realized what God has to give; if you realized how near God is you would have this well curb into an altar. You would change this outer noon day glare into the religious light of the inner temple. You would here and now seek for God. You are still hungry for him, and there is still in you an amazing capacity to be like him."
"Salesmanship"

By this the woman's interest is deepened. "You speak of giving me living water." Remember this woman is thinking only of the water in the well. "Somehow as I listen to you it seems very convincing though I know it is utterly ridiculous. Even though you desire to help me, you couldn't." "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle." "You cannot mean, you just a little more than a youth that you are greater than this saintly patriarch of the long ago."

"That is exactly what I mean," answers Jesus. "I am infinitely greater than Jacob. He gave you a well it is true. But it is not a well that will give permanent satisfaction. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I give shall never thirst. But the water I give you shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

What a tremendous claim. How utterly ridiculous would such a word be on the lips of any other man that ever lived! Even the wisest and the best. Socrates was a great soul; Paul was one of the spiritual giants of all the centuries; Wesley helped to remake the world, but think of any of these saying, "He that drinketh of the water that I give him shall never thirst."

Jesus is uttering two important and abiding truths.

1. He is saying what countless millions have learned—that nothing that this world can give can satisfy. There is no fountain of human origin that can slake our thirsts. If we were to win the whole world we would still be as thirsty as any famished tramp. We would be like the ancient mariner starving to death while water stretched in endless miles on every side of him. "Water water everywhere and all the boards did shrink. Water water everywhere and never a drop to drink." Drink from whatever fountain the world has to offer and our gnawing thirst abides. This world has no power to satisfy.
Here for instance is a young chap that became famous at the age of twenty three. He had the world at his feet. But he was miserable.

"O could I feel as once I felt, and be what I have been,
And weep as once I could have wept over many a vanished sin,
As springs and deserts found some sweet, all brackish though they be,

So midst the withered waste of life, those tears would flow down to me."

Here is a woman who has won a place in the world. But when a friend congratulates her she only answers wearily, "Don't mention it. What I want is rest and peace, peace and rest." Here is a man with bulging barns. He is a financial success. But his soul is tortured with gnawing hunger and burning thirsts.

"Soul, take thine ease," he said. But there is no ease because the soul is not satisfied.

"I'm an alien, I'm an alien from the faith my mother taught me,
I'm an alien to the God that heard my mother when she cried,
I'm a stranger to the comfort that 'now I lay me' brought me,
To the everlasting arms that held my father when he died;
I have spent a life time seeking things I have spurned when I found them,
I have fought, and been rewarded in full many a petty cause,
But I take them all—fame, fortune, and the pleasure to surrender them
And exchange them for the faith that made my mother what she was."

But if Jesus claims that the fountains of this world never satisfy he claims with equal assurance that he can meet the deepest needs of our lives. "The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

How often we need to realize _ourselves_ that it is not what life does to us that deeply matters it is what we are on the inside.

Dr. Jowett tells of visiting an old ruined castle in Scotland. In the very inner precincts of this castle he was surprised to come upon a gurgling spring.
What did it mean? When some bold knight of centuries ago built this castle he was mindful of the fact that he was living in a hostile world. Some day enemies might come and lay siege and cut off all contact from the world without. He might reduce him to starvation. To prevent this the knight saw to it that there was an inner well of which no enemy could rob him. It is this inner well that we need. Enemies lay siege to us. I have watched these enemies lay waste life. They destroy health, wealth, friends, almost all else. But the castle held and life remained radiant because there were inner resources.

Some years ago while guest of a brother pastor he invited me to go with him on a pastoral visit. As we walked down the street he told me something of the circumstances of the woman we were going to see. "Her husband was once one of the most prominent men in our town. But he lost his health and he lost his wealth. And at last his life. Then the children went one by one. Now the widowed mother is living alone, and she herself an invalid." What a pathetic case. I began at once to prepare a little sermonette to preach to her. But when we entered that lowly room and was introduced, the woman herself began to talk and my sermonette melted into thin air. First she spoke of her friends, of how kind they were. Then she passed just as naturally to speak of that other Friend, and how unbelievably gracious and tender he had been. And when we left we were both refreshed. Life had laid siege to this woman, cut off almost all outward supplies, but she was living bravely and grandly because she had a fountain within.

III.

Having received this answer the woman decided to sign on the dotted line. We are not surprised. The surprise is that anybody in any other circumstance should ever pass up this gracious offer of Jesus. "Sir," she said, "give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But now we come to the
most delicate part of the transaction. This woman must be made to understand that if she takes one road she must refuse the other. If she makes a choice of the highest she must of necessity refuse to choose the other. She must be led to make a clean break with her old and ugly past. And with what infinite delicacy Jesus brings her to see this!

"I accept your offer," she says. "All right," Jesus replies, "go call your husband and come hither." "I have no husband," she answers confidently. The interview hasn't grown embarrassing yet. She is certain this Stranger knows nothing of her past. Then Jesus answers quietly, "You have spoken the truth in saying you have no husband. You have had five husbands, but the man with whom you are now living is not your husband." Do you notice the gracious courtesy and delicacy of that? Jesus is putting the emphasis not upon what is wrong about her, but upon what is right. He passes over the fact that she has made shipwreck of five marriages. He touches lightly upon the further fact that she is now living in open adultery. He puts his emphasis on the fact that she has told him the truth. He has found one white flower growing in the weedy garden of this woman's soul. And he points that out and admires it, and makes the poor woman to feel that he does admire it. It often takes us a life time to learn that we can woo folks far better than we can drive them.

But now the interview has become intensely personal. Jesus is no longer talking about people in general. He is not talking about sin in general. He is talking about this woman and her sin. He is calling on her to face it—her own individual need. The woman doesn't like it. Very humanly she wants to shy away from it. It would be far less embarrassing to start a theological discussion. She tries to side track Jesus in that fashion. "It has always been a puzzle to me," she said, "where we ought to worship. Whether in this mountain here in Samaria or up in Jerusalem."

But Jesus refuses to be diverted by an argument. It is never well to argue
with anybody that you would win. "The place one worships," Jesus tells her, "is of little significance. The time is coming, indeed it has already come when the true worshipper must worship the Father in spirit and in sincerity." The place for you to worship, he is saying, is not over yonder on that mountain or either on the mountain of Jerusalem, it is here. Right where we stand. It is your privilege to bow and surrender to God and to meet him face to face.

The poor creature half believed this. Yet, as is so often the case, she is not quite willing to close with God. She is not quite willing to strike her flag. She wants a little time. She is saying, as Felix said and as millions have said, "Go thy way for this time." "Yes," she said, "perhaps you are right. May be I can worship God here, but there are so many things I do not understand. But sometime the Messiah is coming. He will tell me, I will wait for him." Then replies Jesus, "You won't have to wait at all. He has already come. I that speak unto you am he." "Here," he says, "is the place you ought to find God. Now is the time that you ought to find him." And the woman looks into that tender face and believes it. And quick as the lightening flash something takes place in her hungry heart that changes her and her whole world.

Then what? She forgets her errand. She leaves her water pot and hurries back to the village. Why is she going? She is going to tell her story. She is going to share with others the amazing secret that has become now her personal possession. How the cynics would have laughed at her. "What, you going to preach? What of your yesterday? Everybody knows how you have been blown like a filthy rag about the filthy streets of this city. But she refuses to listen. And after these long centuries we find this amazing word, this testimony of John. "Many believed because of the saying of the woman." What a story. The creation of a world, the broadcast of stars, these are little things in comparison of this. There could be nothing better or bigger than sharing with God in the remaking of human lives.
THAT WISTFUL FACE

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

This week some of us have been engaged in a campaign of visitation evangelism. I am quite sure that there were those who undertook this work with great misgivings. That the undertaking was successful beyond our expectations is putting it mildly. I believe the returns were the greatest in proportion to the amount invested that I have known thus far in my ministry. Not that the work was altogether easy! It presented what I consider the sharpest test of Christian loyalty. But those who had a part in it came to a new conviction that the way of Jesus was both sane and workable.

What we have been able to do for others, I think is very real. Only eternity can tell just how abundant are our returns in that respect. But what we have done for ourselves in rendering this service is even more thrilling. Jesus said long ago that it is more blessed to give than to receive. That is true even when our gifts are material. It is doubly true when our gifts are spiritual. No man can introduce another to Jesus Christ without receiving even more fully than the one receives who is introduced. This has come to some of us as a new discovery.

Now because we are eager that this be not one single experience confined to a definite week but an experience that shall become more and more continuous and because we are eager that those who have had a part in this work enlist others we are bringing this message. I am convinced that there is absolutely nothing else that will do so much to enrich our own personal lives and the life of our church as in thus carrying out the plan of Jesus. I am sure also that there is no way in which we can better serve our needy day. When Christ set out upon the mission that has changed the whole world, He gave His best efforts to winning men one by one. In the chapter that I have just read we see our Lord engaged in this work
I

Look at the picture. A young man, little more than a boy, is seated upon an old well-curb. This well is mentioned in Genesis. It was centuries old when Jesus sat there. It is as fresh and life-giving today as it was then. Across the plain comes a woman with a water pitcher upon her shoulder. It is high noon. Therefore, it was to be expected that this woman would have finished her water carrying in the cool of the day, but she is coming now because she dreads the hot rays of the sun less than the hot scorn of her respectable sisters. There are three facts about this woman that are of deep interest. The first of these facts was known to everybody that knew the woman. The second one was known only to two. The third fact was known only to one. Let us look at them in our order.

1. The first fact about this woman was that she was an outcast. That was no deep dark secret. Everybody knew it. She was notorious. Years ago she had married. Perhaps she entered into that beautiful relationship with all the fine hopes and dreams that were yours and mine when we married. But somehow her first marriage went on the rocks. It may have been her own fault. It may be that she gave neither herself or her husband a chance. It may be that she was more sinned against than sinning. She may have married a brute of a man who dragged their orange blossoms through the mud. But be that as it may the marriage ended in failure.

But she was resolute and attractive. And because hope springs eternal in the human breast, she tried again. There was a second divorce, then a third, then a fourth, then a fifth. You can see that she is a very modern woman. She would be quite at home in Hollywood and in many other American cities. At last she decided to quit the whole miserable farce of marriage. Therefore, she takes her man here where she finds him, holds him as long as she can or as long as she cares to, and then passes on to another. Thus she had flitted from house to house and man to man as a bird flits from branch to branch in the boughs of a tree.

2. The second fact about this woman was perhaps known only to herself and
the Man who was talking to her. Though she was an outcast, though she had torn
the moral law into shreds and had made an utter mess of life by so doing, she was
not proud of her job. She was not content to be the kind of woman she was. In the
gay nightlife she laughed it off, but there was a miserable ghost of wretchedness
that would not down. Some thought her the gayest of the gay. But she knew as Jesus
knew that again and again she was forced miserably to hate herself for the thing that
she was.

Not only was she sick of the mess she had made of life, but at times she longed
desperately to be better. At times she looked wistfully toward the heights and
longed to climb. Jesus read that in the deeps of her soul. "If thou knewest the
gift of God," He said, "thou wouldst have asked of him. You long for something
better than you have found. Everybody does. This thirst of which Jesus speaks
belongs not simply to the worst of men but also to the best. We may not be as
conscious of our sin as were our fathers, but we are conscious of our hungers and
thirsts. The face of humanity, as the face of this woman, is one smaunt wistfulness.

3. The third fact about this woman was known to Jesus alone. She was an
outcast woman, an outcast Samaritan woman at that! She was looked upon as the
lowest of the low. She belongs to that class that in every generation is the most
hopeless. I think that in spite of her longing, she had given up hope for herself.
There was only One who still believed in her. There was only One who was still
absolute certain that she did not have to remain as she was. That One was Jesus.

It seems as if the Master were picking out the most hopeless case and making
this a test. He offered her salvation with perfect confidence. He knew how bad
she was. None other knew it so well. He knew also that she could be remade. Luther
Burbank used to say, "Every weed is a possible flower." He had an amazing confidence
in weeds. Jesus had perfect confidence in these human weeds. He counted with
absolute assurance upon the fact that this woman, though she had walked to this
interview through a moral pigsty could yet be changed and turn her steps toward
the lily lands of purity.
II

Look then with that consummate art Jesus set Himself to winning this woman. She was doubtless untaught, but that does not mean she was wanting in intelligence. Her answers indicated that she was a woman of keen mind. In talking to her Jesus gives His very best. This chapter has been spoken of as a Gospel within a Gospel. It contains so much that is fundamental in teaching of the Master. To this outcast woman He uttered some of the profoundest truths that ever fell from His lips.

He opens the conversation with a simple and natural request, "Give me a drink." It is hard to say which is the more direct road to friendship—the doing of a favor or the asking of one. I think generally speaking asking a favor is the more direct, especially if the one of whom the request is made has reason to feel that he is despised as was the case of this woman. The fact that this man who was evidently respectable asked of her a service was an indication that He did not hold her in utter contempt. He was willing to accept the service of her hands. His request ministered to her self-respect. It was such a healing thing to be asked to help that she could hardly believe.

"How is it," she questions in amazement, "that thou, being a Jew, ask a drink of me who am a woman of Samaria?" She knew that no other respectable Jew would have dreamed of speaking to her, to say nothing of asking for her service. This Man was not only a respectable Jew; He was a Rabbi. A Jewish Rabbi would not speak in public even to a Jewish woman, however pure she might be. But here was One who had not the slightest regard for the fixed customs and traditions of His day. No wonder the woman was amazed!

Then Jesus begins to bid for her heart. In a naturally beautiful and spontaneous way, He begins to use this natural water as a means of making the woman ready to receive the water of life. "If thou knewest the gift of God," He says, "and who it is that sayest unto thee, Give me drink, thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water." Notice what the Master is saying. He is recognizing the woman's heart-hunger. He is telling her frankly, "You are not
satisfied with life as you are living it. The only reason you do not change this well-curb into an altar is because you have given up hope. But in giving up hope you are wrong. You can be different."

The woman is deeply interested, but she is still bewildered. She thinks that the Master has reference to the water of Jacob's well. She wonders by what magic He can give her that. "Thou hast nothing to draw with," she reminds him, "and the well is deep." Whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gavest the well and drank thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?"

Then Jesus with that beautiful audacity that always characterized Him seems to answer, "Yes, I am greater than father Jacob, infinitely greater! He gave you the well, it is true! But it is not a well that can bring permanent satisfaction. Whosoever drinks of this water will thirst again. But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be within him a well of water springing up within him, into a well of everlasting life."

What a supreme word that is! And how true millions have found it who have put it to the test! Our supreme need is for inward resources. Nothing that is without can satisfy our needs. The rich farmer had vastly more than enough. His full barns were bursting with plenty. But he was restless and dissatisfied and his soul had no ease. God gives an inward satisfaction that abides both in time and in eternity.

Doctor Jowett tells of visiting an old ruined castle in Scotland. As he walked past one fallen wall after another, he came at last to the very inner precincts of the ruined building. Here to his amazement he found a beautiful spring gurgling and laughing in the sunlight. When he understood the secret of this spring, some ancient baron realizing that he lived in a world of enemies built his castle about this fountain of living water. He did this in order that no foe might be able to cut him off from his source of supply. He could stand any siege because he had inward resources. That is what Jesus is promising this woman through this winsome word.

At this the fish rises to the bait. "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not
neither come all the way hither to draw." Already she has come a long way, but she has not come far enough. This skillful fisher of men has come now to the place that will tax His skill to the utmost. The woman desires the living water. But she cannot receive it, she cannot have the new life unless she is willing to give up the old. How can she be brought to face her sin and to forsake it? Nothing can surpass the tact and skill that Jesus uses here.

"Go call thy husband and come hither," He directs. "I have no husband," came the prompt reply. "Thou hast well said, I have no husband," Jesus answered. "Thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou hast is not thy husband. In that seidest thou truly." "You are living in shame," He tells this woman. But even in reminding her of her sin, He puts the accent on what is good in her rather than what is bad. He does not say, "See there! You are an adulteress!" But He says rather, "You have told me the truth." He finds this white flower growing in the unkept garden of her soul and expresses His admiration.

But though He emphasizes what is good rather than what is bad, there is no slightest effort to gloss over her sin. Jesus never let down the bers. He never treated sin as a harmless and insignificant something. Neither can we. In dealing with those that we seek to win, we only lose when we leave the impression that one can be a Christian and go his own way at the same time. The woman's sense of justice, of fair-play, of decency told her that Jesus was right. She knew she was wrong and that she ought to get right.

It is because of her realization of her wrong that she seeks in some fashion to explain it away. "Yes," she seems to say, "I have made a mess. I have run through five marriages. I have been blown like a filthy rag about the streets of the city. But the reason for this is not that I am bad but because I am puzzled. My difficulties are not moral but intellectual. I have never been able to make up my mind where I ought to worship, whether here at Garazne or at Jerusalem." That is just as modern as your last breath. Many a decent well wisher is holding himself aloof from the church today and explaining his sin by saying that he is perplexed.
as to what church he ought to join. There are intellectual difficulties, but there is one in a thousand in comparison to the moral difficulties. It is not keen thinking but muddy living that results in most of our moral confusion.

Jesus met her objection by saying the place is not the significant matter at all. "The hour is coming, nay it is here now, when the true worshiper will worship the Father in spirit and in sincerity, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. Since worship is a matter of sincerity you can worship by accepting Him right where you stand."

That is plain enough to the woman, but she makes one more effort at escape. As so often happens, she said, "Yes, I see. I am going to worship sometime, but not right now. Messiah is coming before long. I am going to wait for Him." Then Jesus answered, "I that speak unto thee am He. He for whom you fancy you are waiting is in reality waiting for you." Nobody either in the first century or the twentieth has to wait for Him for a single instant. And at this the woman struck her flag and took a draught of the living water.

III

What was the outcome?

1. She left her water-pot. She forgot her errand. She turned aside from the task of the secondary to hurry into the city to tell of the amazing discovery that she had made. It was a bold and rash thing to do. In fact, it seemed almost silly. "Where are you going?" I shout after her. "I am going to tell about Jesus." I am shocked. "You?" I said. "Why the very street boys know you. Everybody knows what kind of life you have lived."

But she is too intent upon her errand to listen. Maybe she doesn't even hear. With a story that is too good to keep she hurries into the village. It was her first attempt at doing any personal work. But in spite of her soiled reputation, in spite of all her handicaps, we read about her this thrilling sentence: "Many believed because of the saying of the women." Here is a task to which Jesus gave His very best. But you and I can also do it if we are willing.
Then this closing word to any who may have so far never received this living water that our Lord is so infinitely eager to give. Remember that it is a gift to be had for the taking. In certain villages of the Orient where the customs change little from century to century one can see to this day water carriers going down the main streets of the village crying his wares in this fashion, "The gift of God! Who will buy? Who will buy? The gift of God! Who will buy? Who will buy?"

Now and then some generous man will buy the carrier's whole water supply and order him to give away his priceless commodity instead of selling it. Then the water carrier will go down the streets with another cry. It is this: "The gift of God. Who will take? Who will take?" That is the cry of the minister. That is the day by day cry of every disciple who is seeking to do the will of His Lord. That is my invitation to you. "The gift of God! Who will take? Who will take?"
A SUCCESSFUL FATHER

John 4:50 - The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way.

Here is a man who made a success. That in itself is a bit exciting. Not only did he make a success, but he did so in about the most helpful way possible. It is well to be a successful farmer, a successful lawyer, a successful minister, a successful statesman. But this man was a successful Father. His gift to the world was the gift of a dedicated family. He became a disciple and helped every member of his household to share his enriching experience.

It is not every day that we come upon dramas where the Father is the hero. When Mother's Day was instituted it came in with a shout of enthusiasm and a gush of tears. I well remember the first Mother's Day sermon I ever preached. It was so tenderly touching that we all wept. Indeed we needed towels to take care of our tears. With the conviction that such an emotional sermon was helpful, I instituted a Father's Day of my own. But that service packed not the slightest punch. Nobody went wild with enthusiasm. Nor has the situation changed with the passing of the years. The last service I attended in my own Church, that forgotten gentleman was not even mentioned. Even Mother's Day even is losing its grip. But it is still a signal for handkerchiefs, while Father's Day is usually a signal for howls.

PART I

How did this ancient Father win? When trouble came to his child, he took it upon himself. His first thoughts of Jesus, his first step toward Him, was not born of his own need, but
of the need of his son. When he was taken ill you may be sure His father who was a royal officer commanded that the best physicians were called in. He had time to play the part of a Father.

That is not always the case. What a modern story is that we read in the Book of Kings. The little chap was eager to go out into the fields where his Father is busy with the harvest. The day was perhaps very hot. Soon the lad was stricken with a terrible headache. At once he rushed to his Father crying, "Oh! My head! My head!". Perhaps he had a sunstroke.

What did the Father do? At once he forgot the business of harvesting. He gathered the little chap in his arms and hurried away to find a physician.

No. That was what we expect. But he did not answer his suffering son at all. Instead he commanded a servant, "take him to his Mother". So what? He sat on his Mother's lap, says the pathetic story, until noon and then died. Why did he die? His Father did not kill him. He simply let him alone.

In some respects our modern young fathers share the responsibilities of their home better than did the Father's of my generation. We thought it a bit beneath us to help with household duties, washing dishes and such. The young modern Father often does this. But the present day Father simply hasn't time to be a Father.

Some time ago a young Father, who held a good position said, to me almost gleefully, "I don't have time to get acquainted with my own children. I am up and gone in the morning while they are still asleep. I don't get home at night until after they have gone to bed." He prides himself that he is
supplying the material needs of his children. But where there is a higher need, a need to be taught a Faith by which the soul lives, and by which a Nation lives or it rots down, he should take him to his Mother, or to the Baby Sitter, or to the Sunday School Teacher.

The hero of our text made the boy's need his own. Why did he go to Jesus? He knew very little about Him. His faith was a very ignorant and imperfect faith. A friend had doubtless said, "I was in Jerusalem a few days ago. While there I met a young prophet from Nazareth. He did certain cures that made everybody wonder. He may be able to do something for you."

That seems quite little to go on. When he met this official on his way to meet Jesus, I said, "Are you sure He has the power to cure him? Are you sure that He would even care to cure him, if He has the power?" "No!", came the answer. "I am not sure. My appeal may accomplish nothing. I am sure of this. If something is not done, I am going to lose my son. I may lose him any way, but I am not going to lose him until I have done my best to save him".

Now when this man reached Jesus he prayed this prayer. "My son is lying at Capernium at the point of death. Come down and heal him". Notice his prayer. He not only asked Jesus to heal his son, but he also told him how to do it. He must come down. He could not conceive of Jesus healing at a distance.

What did our Lord answer? Had I seen this Father I should have found His answer quite depressing. He said, "Unless you see signs of wonders, you will not believe." This "you" here is plural. Jesus did not say "thou", but he spoke to this
man as a crowd. He is simply saying "you are like the multitude. You believe only what you see. You have got to see signs of wonders because you believe in them more than you believe in me".

When Naaman came to be healed, the victorious soldier doubtless sat very erect in his chariot as he sent the servant in to tell the prophet. General Naaman was without desiring to be recovered from his leprosy. When the servant came back, he came alone. "Where is the prophet?", questioned Naaman. "Is He coming out?" He didn't look to as if he were. "Well, what did He say?" "He said for you to go and dip in Jordan seven times".

That was a simple and clear cut direction. It was something a child could do. But instead of hastening to obey with joyful gratitude, he blazed with anger. Instead he went away in a rage.

When I, as an old friend, met him a few moments later and questioned him as to what he was doing in Samaria, he said he came to get cured of leprosy. "Did you get cured?" I asked. "No!" he replied indignantly. "Why can't He cure you? Did He refuse to take any interest in you at all?" "No, it was not that. I thought He would come out and strike his hand over the place and recover the lepor. He had made up his mind in advance as to how he was going to be cured. "I want you to know that if I am ever cured at all, I am going to be cured on my own terms." The man who takes that position will never be cured.

Look at the response of this wise Father. "You are a sign seeker," said Jesus, "like the rest". This desperate Father
A Successful Father

didn't get angry. He didn't deny it. He didn't insist on having his own way. He simply said, "I am not denying that I am a sign seeker. All I say is that I am a desperate and needy seeker. I have to have help. Come down before my child dies". Then it happened! "Go," said Jesus. "Your son will live."

What did the Father do then? Here is the crucial test. He has prayed and has received a definite promise. Did he keep on asking, as we so often do when we have the promise right before us? Did he consult his own emotions instead of the man to whom he was praying? No. He simply took Jesus at his word and went his way.

That is faith. Faith means clearly in the New Testament what it means in everyday usage. As a penniless young minister, I asked a girl who was the belle of her village to become my wife. To the amazement, I think, of almost everybody, she consented. I believed her. I believed her so emphatically that I invested $15 in a tailor made suit and traveled all the way from Texas to Tennessee. Suppose she had backed down? Perhaps she would have missed the best chance she ever had. Faith is acting on God's promise. Whence man in God.

PART II

The next glimpse we get of this wise Father, he is on his way home. "How is your boy," I asked him. "He is doing splendidly", he answered. "He is going to recover." "Fine, when did you hear from him?" "I haven't heard from him since I left home." "Well, how do you know he is going to get well?" "Perhaps you won't understand, but a young carpenter gave me his
word that he would and I believe Him." So complete was his faith that he did not hurry home that day. Had I been in his place, I think I should have said, "I believe he is going to get well, but I just see for myself and that as soon as possible." But as you read the story you will see that this Father either spent the night in Canna, or with some friend on the road to Capernium. As he was continuing his journey the next day, some glad servants met him and shouted, the good news. "Your son is living!" "When did he begin to improve?" the Father asked. "He did not improve. He simply got well yesterday at one o'clock the fever left him. One moment he was burning with fever, the next minute he was well." Healing is sometimes a long process. It sometimes it is instantaneous.

PART III

The author of this lovely story does not tell of the Father's arrival, but I imagine the whole household went out to meet him. Among them was this small boy who yesterday was at the point of death, and his Father gathered him into his strong arms and when they had entered the house the whole household was assembled when the Father told his amazing story. "When I first heard of Jesus, I thought of Him simply as a wonder worker who might or might not care, who might or might not be able to help. When I prayed to Him, He gave me His word to save my son. I came to believe both in His willingness and in his power. Since He has done this, I am going to take another step. I am going to dedicate myself to Him and I invite you to join me." And they did, and a Christian home was born.
Children need two parents. They need a Mother, but they need a Father no less. Years ago, at the close of service, a physician told me that he had two sons, 24 and 26 years of age respectively. Neither of them, said this earnest man who was the village physician, is a Christian. I want you to join me in prayer for their salvation.

Naturally I agreed. But standing beside me was one of the most powerful saints I have known. He knew the doctor, so he dared ask him this question. "Have you ever put yourself on the altar for your two boys?" Then came the reply "I am not sure I know what you mean?" "I mean this. If those were my boys I would tell God here and now that I will not eat nor sleep until He saves them. If you will take that vow, I will join you in it and pledge myself not to eat nor sleep until those boys are saved."

I was young in the ministry, but I saw they were doing business in great waters. I stood back and said nothing while these two pledged themselves not to eat nor sleep until God had answered their prayers. I had many misgivings and was glad I hadn't joined them.

The news of this got around. People realized that these were not engaged in target practice, but were shooting to kill. The youngest son heard of it and went home and went to bed. The oldest son responded with anger, went and hitched up his team and set out for his ranch that was 50 miles east in the country, solemnly vowing that he would not come back until the whole blank matter was over.
Then what? The youngest woke at midnight to find that physician and his wife kneeling at his bedside. He sprang out of bed and kneeled between them and made the great dedication. I learned of this next morning as I was entering the pulpit to preach. I found it very impressive, but I was still saying "How about the oldest son?" I began my sermon and a very few minutes later I heard the rumbling of a farm wagon. Then the oldest son, dressed still in his farm clothes, came into the tabernacle, and when the invitation was given he accepted. These, along with this Father of long ago, believed the word of the Lord, the word Jesus had spoken, and acted on it. May we be this wise.
John 4:50 - The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and went his way.

The hero of the story of which my text is a part, is a father. Of course this is not altogether unique, but it is rare enough to be a bit exciting.

I well remember the first Mother's Day sermon I ever preached. It was in a college chapel. That congregation was not much given to expressing emotion. But on that day we all wept bountifully, indeed we needed towels to take care of our tears. Feeling that it often helps people to weep, that it purges something mean out of them, I was thrilled.

Now because this service was so victorious, I was eager for another of equal value. Therefore I set a special Sunday for Father's Day. But, for some reason, that service was little short of a flop. In comparison with Mother's Day, it was like passing out of a garden into a desert. We had no fit songs. Those who had sung "Tell Mother I'll be There" with tearful enthusiasm, seemed as hesitant in singing "Tell Father I'll Be There", as if they were in doubt as to where the old boy was. No towels were needed for our tears. A single cobweb would have been sufficient.

Since that day, father's stock has risen a bit. I believe the present day father takes a little more responsibility in the work of the home, than young father's did in my day. Mother's stock, on the other hand, has gone down somewhat. This is due in part to the fact that so many present-day mothers work outside the home. Too many parents are so busy working, or so busy amusing themselves, that they have little time for
their children. It is one of the tragedies of our day that many boys and girls grow up with only one parent or none at all, though both father and mother are alive.

Fathers have often been too busy. A young father said to me rather gleefully, "I hardly know my own children. I am up and away in the morning before they rise. By the time I get home at night they are asleep. So I'm hardly acquainted with them". Well, that has become more common perhaps in our day, but it has been a trait of fathers, in some measure, throughout the years.

Here is a story that comes out of long gone centuries. A little lad is allowed to go out in the field where his father is harvesting. Soon he is taken desperately ill. He rushes to his father, crying "My head! My head!" What does the father do? Drop everything and gather him in his arms and hurry to a physician? Not a bit of it. He is too busy. He does not even speak to the lad. He ordered a servant: "Take him to his Mother". The servant obeys. But the story ends on this tragic note. "He sat on her lap until noon and then died."

Our text shows us a father who took the business of fatherhood seriously. His story is a drama in these acts.

ACT I

As the curtain rises we see this father hurrying on his way to meet Jesus. How did he come to make this first encounter with our Lord? He came on behalf of his boy who was desperately ill. This man was a royal official. He was a man of means and of standing. He had doubtless already called to the aid of his son the very best physicians of that day. But in spite
What a Father!

of that the boy was slowly dying. He was now convinced that unless he could find help beyond what he had found before, he was going to lose his son. Therefore he came to this young prophet.

What did he know about Jesus? I am sure that he knew very little. I am sure further that that little was by heresay. Someone had doubtless told him that while Jesus was in Jerusalem He had wrought certain cures. So, this troubled father with a very imperfect faith decided that he would appeal to Jesus on behalf of his boy. If you had asked him as he left Capernium to journey twenty miles to Canna to see Jesus, "Are you sure that He will be willing to cure your son?" He would have answered, "No, I am not sure. I don't know." "Are you sure that even if He is willing that He will be able to cure him?" "That too I do not know." "Well," I would have said, "Don't you think it is a bit of a fool's errand to journey this twenty miles when you do not know whether He is either willing or able to cure him?"

Then the father answered, "Even though I do not know of His willingness or of his ability, I do know this, that unless something is done, my son is going to die. If I go to this young prophet and He is not interested, or if He is interested and is not able, then I will not have lost anything. It will certainly not make my son any the worse for me to go. But, on the other hand, if I go and He is willing and able to cure, then I have saved my son. I am simply giving my son and myself the advantage of the doubt." So he went to this young Carpenter.

Now when he reached Jesus, he prayed this simple prayer. "My son is very ill. Come down and help him." You notice
that he not only asked Jesus to cure his son, but he told Him how to do it. He must do it by coming down. He had no conception of a Christ who could heal at a distance. That great pagan whose faith took Jesus by surprise, having asked healing for his slave, and having seen Jesus on His way to his house, sent Him word not to come. He said "It's no use. I know, because I have soldiers under me, and I can give orders and they are carried out. You have the forces of the universe under you, so there's no use for you to come." He didn't ask for the presence of Jesus, but this man had no such faith.

Now what response did Jesus make? If I had been that father I would have been quite discouraged, and possibly even offended by it. He said, "Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." This "you" here is not singular, as we should expect. It is not "Except thou", but it is "except you". It is the plural. He is putting this official in with the crowd. He is saying "You're like the excited mobs in Jerusalem. You are a sign seeker, just as they are. You say seeing is believing."

We say that to this day, though far more often believing is seeing. It was by believing that a ship heavier than air could be made to fly that the Wright brothers came to see. It was by believing that the world was round that Columbus came to see that it actually was. And so this man stood among the crowd who demanded a sign.

How did he react to this rebuke? Well, he didn't resent it. He didn't deny it. He didn't get angry. He was an improvement over General Naaman. You know when Naaman came to be recovered
of his leprosy, the prophet told him that all he had to do was to go dip in Jordan seven times. Proud Naaman went away in a rage. Why was he so angry? When as a friend I met him down the street, I asked "What are you doing in Samaris?" He said, I came to be cured of leprosy." "Did you get cured?" "No!"
"Why didn't you get cured?" "Why," he said, "I didn't get cured," he answered hotly, "because the prophet didn't cure me as I had made up my mind to be cured. I thought He was going to come out and strike His hand over the place and recover the leper. You see I want to be cured on my own terms. Indeed if I'm not, I'm not going to get cured at all."

But nobody gets cured on his own terms. When you consult a physician, it is he, not you, who decides the treatment. You don't get anything on your own terms. If you decide to raise a garden, you needn't say "I'm not going to act as these other folks do; plow the land and plant the seed. I'm going to raise a garden just as I please." I decided as a young chap that I was going to learn to play the violin. I spent almost two days at it, but when I found that I couldn't play the violin on my own terms, I gave it up.

You certainly can't be saved on your own terms. This is true, not because God is narrow and stubborn. It's simply true in the nature of things. So this man, when Jesus told him that he was a mere sign seeker, accepted it. He did not try to defend himself. He had just one weight upon his soul, the need of his boy. He said, "Sir, come down before my child dies", and Jesus could not resist that earnest and impassioned appeal. So He said to him, "Go, your son will live".
ACT II

Now what was the father's reaction to this simple promise? The father had come to this meeting with just one item of business on his agenda. That was the securing of healing for his son. So when Jesus said to him, "Your son is going to live," that ended the business. At once this wise official adjourned the meeting and set out for the next task.

But we don't always do that way. Sometimes when we bring our petition to our Lord and have His definite promise before us, we don't take it. We simply ask over and over again for what He has already promised. Or we ask Him to make a simple promise stronger than a promise. We want it backed up by our emotions. We say "I don't feel like my son's going to get well". Or we want Him to prop it up by another promise, and another. Now our Lord simply does not act like that.

"I wouldn't believe him on oath," we say of a certain individual. Well, if you wouldn't believe his bare word, neither could you believe his oath. What prompted Jesus to say "swear not at all", is because it became a custom among the Jews/to look upon a promise as binding unless it was sworn to. And then they went a step further and even if it was sworn to it must be sworn to by a certain kind of oath. And so they went on until lying became a habit and the expected thing. If you can't take a man's simple word, you can't believe him on oath.

Jesus said, "Go, your son will live". And this father took Him at His word and set out for home. There is an added touch, he did not go home that day. It seems to me, he had been in his place I would have secured the fastest horse in Canna and
run him all the way to Capernium to see if the boy was really well. But "He that believeth," the scripture says, "shall not make haste." When I met this official down the street, I said, "How is your boy?" He said "He's all right." "When did you hear from him?" "I haven't heard from him at all directly. I heard from him indirectly through a young carpenter up the way. He said he's going to get well." "Have you been home to see?" I asked. "No, I'm not going today." He had some important business, perhaps, to transact, and so he either stayed with a friend in Canna or stayed with some friend on the road. At least he did not get home until the next day. Nor did he lie awake that night, I am sure, wondering if his son was really getting well. He simply rested his head upon the promise of Jesus and went to sleep.

Now the next day as he was going home some sunny faced servants met him, and they rushed forward fairly shouting the good news, "Your son is alive!" This father was not as astonished as they expected him to be. His face didn't take on any new light. It already looked like a miniature sunrise. I dare say they were a bit surprised at how quietly he took it. Instead of shouting over it, he simply said "What hour did he begin to mend?" And they gave this amazing answer, "He didn't begin to mend, he just got well. Yesterday at one o'clock he was burning with fever, and yesterday at one o'clock his fever left him and he was well. It was instantaneous."

The next scene is his reaching home.
What a Father!

I can imagine that when they had met the master turned on his heels and hurried home to tell the household of the master's coming. When this official arrived they were all out to meet him. Among those of course was the small boy now fit and well. As the father ran forward and lifted him into his arms he knew the joy of having recovered his boy as a fresh gift from Jesus, but the Giver as well. So when they were in the house, all gathered about this father as he led his witnesses, "Now," he said, "the man who did that for me, who led me from a vague faith to be sure of Him, that man can have my life now and forever." But not only did he believe, but all his household. Thus, the most important institution on the face of this earth was established.

The one who made this possible was a father who began with a vague faith, but because he was loyal to what he believed, was led into a larger faith. There is nothing truer than this, that if we live up to the light we have, it will lead us into the fullness of the light. But however bright may be the vision now, if we fail to live up to it, it will change to darkness.

"For to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, even that he has shall be taken away."

Here is the open road to victory. "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him." That same Jesus has and is speaking to you and me. He is saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest". He is promising "Him that cometh with me I will in no wise cast out". All you need to do is to take Him at His word and go your joyous way.
Now our Lord sometimes heals that way today. He heals spiritually, instantaneously, and as a process, He heals physically instantaneously and as a process. As a youthful school teacher years ago, I stayed in a country home where the Mother was a nominal Christian, a fine woman. But she became ill with a lingering sickness, and the doctors were baffled and it looked like she was going to pass on. And she began to pray for her own recovery, and got no where. Then she began to plead that she might live in order to mother her four growing boys. And still she got no where. And then one day, in a high moment of faith, she said "Lord, the boys were yours before they were mine. I trust them and all else into thy hands. Thy will be done." And so I boarded that very hour, rose, and I boarded in that home, and I can give my personal testimony that that woman moved about that little community like a rich and rare perfume (and the beauty of the Lord God rested upon her, as the sunshine rested on the hills.) She took the Lord at His word and was healed.

PART III

The next scene is the home going. (We have to read the story between the lines.) I can imagine that a servant turned on his heels when they had met the master and hurried home to tell the official's wife and the rest of the household. And when this official arrived they were all out to meet him, and among those where came to meet him was his small boy. And as they ran into each other's arms, and as the father lifted him and hugged his neck and kissed his lips, He knew that he had had a fresh gift from the young carpenter up the way. And when they were in the house, all gathered about this father with his beaming face and
A FATHER'S FAITH

"And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and went his way."

-- John 4:50

The hero of this story happens to be a father. That is a bit unique. Father's reputation has suffered a collapse. It has gone into eclipse. He used to rate. In fact they used to flatter him with some such title as head of the family. But that is largely of yesterday. He seldom plays the hero now. His part is usually that of the villain or that of the clown. Mother's name is still a signal for handkerchiefs, while father's is largely a signal for howls. But here the audience is refreshingly reversed. This father plays a notable part. The story is really a beautiful drama in three scenes.

I

The first scene shows us the father pouring out his earnest and eager prayer in the presence of Jesus. Why has he come to see this strange Carpenter from Nazareth? He has come for two compelling reasons.

First, he has a great and pressing need that he does not know how to meet in any other way. He is at the end of his own strength; he sees no way out but the help of mere human hands. And so he turns to Jesus.

Second, this father came to Jesus because he had faith in Him. He believed that Jesus might help him. It is true that this was a very ignorant and imperfect faith. He perhaps had no first-hand information of Jesus at all. He had simply heard that while this young Carpenter was in Jerusalem that He had wrought
certain signs. He did not know that He was God come to flesh. He had no thought that He was to bring light and immortality to life through the gospel. He simply heard that there was a kindly man who had helped others. It was a very imperfect faith, but he acted on it, and it brought him to Jesus.

This is the reason that lies behind most of our quests after Christ. Our needs become too much for us. Our burdens become too heavy. Sometimes we come driven by consciousness of guilt. There is a damaging spot on hand or heart that we cannot wash away. There is a crushing burden upon our souls from which we cannot be free. And we go in quest of him. We yearn for cleansing. We seek Him because we long that our burden should tumble from our shoulders as it did from those of Christian in Bunyan's immortal story, when he came within sight of the cross.

Then, we come to Him tormented by gnawing hungers and by burning thirsts. We find ourselves short on life. And because we want to live and live abundantly we seek Him. Or perhaps you have caught a vision of the better man you might be. You have seen that distant climber way out ahead of you, sun-kissed and sun-crowned, and you have recognized in Him your possible self. His image torments you, and you find it impossible to rest till you go in search of One who is able to bring you to your possibilities.

Then again, we seek Jesus not simply for ourselves but for the sake of others. We find ourselves face to face with the responsibilities that in our own strength we cannot meet. That was the case with that embarrassed host of whom Jesus spoke. A guest had come at midnight. This guest must be fed, but the larder is empty. There is nothing for his host to do but to hurry out into the night and knock at the door of the house of his friend and ask him for help. He knew such a request would be annoying, but
there was nothing else to do. This was his excuse—"A friend of mine in his journey stumbled in and I have nothing to set before him."

It was this kind of a need that prompted this father. He had a Jaddie that he loved. Disease had taken him, that son, into its destroying fingers and the father was powerless to help, but he could not let him go till he had availed himself of every resource within his reach. It is sin perhaps, that has taken your boy or your friend in its defiling fingers. You feel powerless in your own strength. You must have help from above, or the battle will be lost. And what is true of this father is true of every single one of us. There is not a man, woman, or child present but that has obligations that in their own strength they simply cannot meet. This ought to send us on the same high quest of this father of the long ago.

Now, when this earnest seeker came to Jesus, he told Him his pitiful story. That is, through prayer to make our way into the presence of our Lord, and tell Him of our needs and of our perplexities. And what answer did Jesus make to this man's prayer? Let us confess frankly that His answer seems a bit disappointing. When this Father came in hot haste, begging Him to come and heal his son, Jesus did not say, "I will come", He rather said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." He addresses him not as an individual but as one of the company. He is saying virtually, "You are like the others, you are seeking me solely for what I can do, not for what I am." Jesus had performed certain signs in Jerusalem. The crowd had marveled at Him. They had been amazed at what He could do. But they had been but little thrilled by what He was.

Now what Jesus is telling us is that He is a mere sign-seeker. His declaration is not so much a rebuke as it is a counsel. There are tears in the word, tears of grief and disappointment. This was the case because Jesus knew that the man was robbing himself.
We are still sign-seekers. Some want signs that are scientifically correct. They are afraid of miracles. They seem to smack of the violation of law. But I am convinced that Jesus in the working of His miracles never violated a single law. He simply utilized, through the power of God, laws that we have not learned to use. But there are others that want signs in terms of the outward, or in terms of inward emotions. We are still slaves to the seen. A man hungry for bread moves us, but another hungry for the Bread of Life leaves us calm. A crooked finger straightened in answer to prayer fills us with wild enthusiasm. A crooked man made to walk in newness of life gets scant attention. Still Jesus is saying: "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe me."

This father does not deny the charge. He is conscious of the weakness of his faith. But he will not allow that fact to silence his prayer. With all his faults, he is desperately in earnest. The one hopeless man is the man who never gets in earnest. This man is no trifler. He still presses his claim, "Come down, ere my child die." He is simply saying, "I will not dispute what you say, I am a sign-seeker, but above all else I want the life of my child." He still wants to tell Jesus how to heal him. He still has not the daring faith to leave the matter wholly in His hands. He must come down in order to cure. Unless He really comes to stand by the boy's bedside, he sees no chance.

Now men of that type of faith did not die with this father. We have them still. When we bring a petition, we not only seek an answer but we want to tell Jesus how to answer. Elisha was like that. When he went to see the Prophet Elisha to be recovered of his leprosy, he made up his mind as to the method of his cure. When he saw that it was not going to happen in that fashion, he went away in a rage.
"Why so hot and angry, General?" "I thought," he said, "that he would come out and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." He, as this father, wanted not only the cure but they wanted to dictate the method.

But what answer does Jesus make? He chooses His own method. He says virtually, "I will not come down. I will not give you an outward sign, but I will give you a promise. I will give you my sure word." And then He gave it. "Go thy way, thy son liveth." Now, this seeker has something on which to plant his feet. What will he do with it? He has the sure word of God, the sure word of Christ, on which to stand. What will be the outcome? This is his hour of testing. It is the hour that is to determine whether the blessing is to be his or not.

II

This brings us to the second scene. What did this father do with the promise that has been given him? He might have done what we usually do, ignored it and kept on pleading. How often we come face to face with a definite promise from God, plead that promise and then instead of going our way, keep on pleading it, as if God needs must say the same thing to us over and over again. This man might have gone his way, saying "He has indeed promised me the life of my child, but somehow I cannot believe it is true." But instead of this, he went away convinced that his prayer had been heard. I met him down the street a little later. "Good evening, what are you doing in Cana at this hour?" "I have come up to see Jesus about my boy. You see he has been very sick. In fact the doctors despair of him." "Well, how did you get on," I asked. "All right," he answered, "he is going to get well."
"Have you heard from him?" I continue. "Oh, no, but Jesus told me just now that everything was going to be all right. And I believe that He was speaking sober truth."

"Now, when did the blessing for which this father was seeking really become his? It became his the very moment that he took Jesus at His word. That is always the case. Here is a promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." When does that promise become yours? The moment you accept it. When you come, then and there Jesus receives you regardless of what your emotions may be, regardless of inner or outward circumstances. If a man ventures on the Word of Jesus, he is never put to confusion. The blessing is yours the moment you venture on its works. "All things whatsoever that you pray for, believe that ye receive and ye shall have it." But if you will not receive it, Jesus cannot give it. No one, not even God, can give us what we refuse to take.

III

In this third scene this father comes to a full assurance that his petition has been granted. Having spent a night in Cana, (and mark you, that spending the night was a high example of faith) He is now on the way back to Capernaum. As He rounds the bend of the road He sees certain of his slaves coming to meet him. Their faces are radiant. They are the bearers of good news. As soon as they are within speaking distance they deliver that joyful message, "Thy son liveth," they cry. You will note that these are the words that Jesus had spoken the day before. This father, as has happened to many of God's saints, had advance information. "When did he begin to get better?" he asks. "He did not begin to get better," was the
answer, he got well at once. Yesterday at 11:00 o'clock, the fever left him.

Then what? "Then, says the story, the father knew that that was the same hour in which Jesus had given him the promise, and himself believed, and his whole house. He had believed dimly and ignorantly before he ever came to Jesus. He believed when Jesus gave him His promise that his son would live. But now he is come to an even surer and deeper faith, a faith that leads him to commit himself and all that he has into the hands of Jesus forever. As we use the faith we have, it will grow from more to more. If we fail to use it, it will wither and die. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but to him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Now the experience of this father has been repeated in its essential countless millions of times. Wherever a human soul ventures on the prayer word of Jesus, the promise that he seeks becomes His though there be no sign either within or without. If you will surrender to Jesus, He will accept this you. I said on one occasion to a friend of mine who claimed to be an atheist, "I will do it", was his firm reply. I shook hands with him upon his decision, and he looked at me with steady honest eyes and said, "Don't misunderstand me, I am a stranger to Jesus, but I have done what you said, I have surrendered to Him. I am His follower now." "All right", I answered, "that is all He asks." That man went home to come, before he slept, into the radiance of the great assurance.

Many of you can tell a similar story out of your own experience. I know a minister who came upon lean, gray days in his ministry, when he preached without enthusiasm because he had no sure sense of God in his life. His spiritual poverty drove him to his knees. One morning he was pleading for a definite promise,
as he had many times before. Suddenly he said to himself, "This promise is either true or it is not true. How shall I take it? I will take it as true," he answered. And he arose without the slightest thrill, but with something of that calm certainty I think that characterizes this father as he turned away from Jesus. Later in the day, when he was engaged in other matters, he found himself shaking with quiet laughter and the consciousness that he possessed the peace that passeth all understanding.

Here, then, is a message for you and me. Some of us need it and need it desperately. We are heart-hungry. We are trying to be Christian. We do have a form of Godliness; but there is less power. How have we missed the way? We have sought, but we have not found. What is the matter? Perhaps we have tried to refuse the divine need. We have demanded the blessing before the exercising of faith. But we do not arrive by that road. First is the promise. Second is the receiver. Third is the realization. Or as another has put it - fact, faith, feeling. The word of Jesus is true, if you act on it. Soon or late you will find it true in your inner life, "He that believeth hath the witness within himself."

Dr. Zone and wife to Johnson,
WHAT A FATHER!

John 4:50 — The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and went his way.

The hero of the story of which my text is a part, is a father. Of course this is not altogether unique, but it is rare enough to be a bit exciting.

I well remember the first Mother's Day sermon I ever preached. It was in a college chapel. That congregation was not much given to expressing emotion. But on that day we all wept bountifully, indeed we needed towels to take care of our tears. Feelling that it often helps people to weep, that it purges something mean out of them, I was thrilled.

Now because this service was so victorious, I was eager for another of equal value. Therefore I set a special Sunday for Father's Day. But, for some reason, that service was little short of a flop. In comparison with Mother's Day, it was like passing out of a garden into a desert. We had no fit songs. Those who had sung "Tell Mother I'll Be There" with tearful enthusiasm, seemed as hesitant in singing "Tell Father I'll Be There", as if they were in doubt as to where the old boy was. No towels were needed for our tears. A single cobweb would have been sufficient.

Since that day, father's stock has risen a bit. I believe the present day father takes a little more responsibility in the work of the home, than young father's did in my day. Mother's stock, on the other hand, has gone down somewhat. This is due in part to the fact that so many present-day Mothers work outside the home. Too many parents are so busy working, or so busy amusing themselves, that they have little time for
their children. It is one of the tragedies of our day that many boys and girls grow up with only one parent or none at all, though both father and mother are alive.

Fathers have often been too busy. A young father said to me rather gleefully, "I hardly know my own children. I am up and away in the morning before they rise. By the time I get home at night they are asleep. So I am hardly acquainted with them". Well, that has become more common perhaps in our day, but it has been a trait of fathers, in some measure, throughout the years.

Here is a story that comes out of long gone centuries. A little laddie is allowed to go out in the field where his father is harvesting. Soon he is taken desperately ill. He rushes to his father, crying "My head! My head!" What does the father do? Drop everything and gather him in his arms and hurry to a physician? Not a bit of it. He is too busy. He does not even speak to the lad. He ordered a servant: "Take him to his Mother". The servant obeys. But the story ends on this tragic note. "He sat on her lap until noon and then died."

Our text shows us a father who took the business of fatherhood seriously. His story is a drama in these acts.

ACT I

As the curtain rises we see this father hurrying on his way to meet Jesus. How did he come to make this first encounter with our Lord? He came on behalf of his boy who was desperately ill. This man was a royal official. He was a man of means and of standing. He had doubtless already called to the aid of his son the very best physicians of that day. But in spite
What a Father!

of that the boy was slowly dying. He was now convinced that unless he could find help beyond what he had found before, he was going to lose his son. Therefore he came to this young prophet.

What did he know about Jesus? I am sure that he knew very little. I am sure further that that little was by heresay. Someone had doubtless told him that while Jesus was in Jerusalem He had wrought certain cures. So, this troubled father with a very imperfect faith decided that he would appeal to Jesus on behalf of his boy. If you had asked him as he left Capernum to journey twenty miles to Canna to see Jesus, "Are you sure that He will be willing to cure your son?" He would have answered, "No, I am not sure. I don't know." "Are you sure that even if He is willing that He will be able to cure him?" "That too I do not know."

"Well," I would have said, "Don't you think it is a bit of a fool's errand to journey this twenty miles when you do not know whether He is either willing or able to cure him?" Then the father answered, "Even though I do not know of His willingness or of His ability, I do know this, that unless something is done, my son is going to die. If I go to this young Prophet and He is not interested, or if He is interested and is not able, then I will not have lost anything. It will certainly not make my son any worse for me to go. But, on the other hand, if I go and He is willing and able to cure, then I have saved my son. I am simply giving my son and myself the advantage of the doubt." So he went to this young Carpenter.

Now when he reached Jesus, he prayed this simple prayer. "My son is very ill. Come down and heal him." You notice
that he not only asked Jesus to cure his son, but he told Him how to do it. He must do it by coming down. He had no conception of a Christ who could heal at a distance. That great pagan whose faith took Jesus by surprise, having asked healing for his slave, and having seen Jesus on His way to his house, sent Him word not to come. He said "It's no use. I know, because I have soldiers under me, and I can give orders and they are carried out. You have the forces of the universe under you, so there's no use for you to come." He didn't ask for the presence of Jesus, but this man had no such faith.

Now what response did Jesus make? If I had been that father I would have been quite discouraged, and possibly even offended by it. He said, "except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." This "you" here is not singular, as we should expect. It is not "Except thou", but it is "except you". It is plural. He is putting this official in with the crowd. He is saying "You're like the excited mobs in Jerusalem. You are a sign seeker, just as they are. You say seeing is believing."

We say that to this day, though far more often believing is seeing. It was by believing that a ship heavier than air could be made to fly that the Wright brothers came to see. It was by believing that the world was round that Columbus came to see that it actually was. And so this man stood among the crowd who demanded a sign.

How did he react to this rebuke? Well, he didn't resent it. He didn't deny it. He didn't get angry. He was an improvement over General Naaman. You know when Naaman came to be recovered
of his leprosy, the prophet told him that all he had to do was to go dip in Jordan seven times. Proud Naaman went away in a rage. Why was he so angry? When a friend I met him down the street, I asked "What are you doing in Samaris?" He said, I came to be cured of leprosy." "Did you get cured?" "No!" "Why didn't you get cured?" "I didn't get cured," he answered hotly, "because the prophet didn't cure me as I had made up my mind to be cured. I thought He was going to come out and strike His hand over the place and recover the leper. You see I want to be cured, but on my own terms. Indeed if I am not, I am not going to get cured at all."

But nobody gets cured on his own terms. When you consult a physician, it is he, not you, who decides the treatment. You don't get anything on your own terms. If you decide to raise a garden, you needn't say "I'm not going to act as these other folks; plow the land and plant the seed. I'm going to raise a garden just as I please. I decided as a young chap that I was going to learn to play the violin. I spent almost two days at it, but when I found that I couldn't play the violin on my own terms, I gave it up.

You certainly can't be saved on your own terms. This is true, not because God is narrow and stubborn. It's simply true in the nature of things. So this man, when Jesus told him that he was a mere sign-seeker, accepted it. He did not try to defend himself. He had just one weight upon his soul, the need of his boy. He said, "Sir, come down before my child dies", and Jesus could not resist that earnest and impassioned appeal. So He said to him, "Go, your son will live".
ACT II

Now what was the father's reaction to this simple promise? He had come to this meeting with just one item of business on his agenda. That was the securing of healing for his son. So when Jesus said to him, "Your son is going to live," that ended the business. At once this wise official adjourned the meeting and set out for the next task.

But we don't always do that. Sometimes when we bring our petition to our Lord and have His definite promise before us, we don't take it. We simply ask over and over again for what He has already promised. Or we ask Him to make a simple promise stronger than a promise. We want it backed up by our emotions. We say "I don't feel like my son's going to get well". Or we want Him to prop it up by another promise, and yet another. Now our Lord simply does not act like that.

"I wouldn't believe him on oath," we say of a certain individual. Well, if you wouldn't believe his bare word, neither could you believe his oath. What prompted Jesus to say "swear not at all", was the fact it had become a custom among the Jews to look upon a promise as binding only when it was sworn to. Then they went a step further, even if it was sworn to it must be sworn to by a certain kind of oath. Thus they continued until lying became the expected thing, even a fixed habit. If you can't take a man's simple word, you can't believe him on oath.

Jesus said, "Go, your son will live". At once this father took Him at His word and set out for home. There is an added touch, he did not go home that day. It seems to me that if I had been in his place I should have secured the fastest horse
horse in Canna and run him all the way to Capernaum to see if the boy was really well. But "He that believeth," the Scripture says, "shall not make haste". When I met this official down the street, I said "How is your boy?" He said "He's all right." "When did you hear from him?" "I haven't heard from him at all directly. I heard from him indirectly through a young carpenter up the way. He said he's going to get well." "Have you been home to see?" I asked. "No, I'm not going today." He had some important business, perhaps, to transact, and so he either stayed with a friend in Canna or stayed with some one on the road. At least he did not get home until the next day. Nor did he lie awake that night, I am sure, wondering if his son was really getting well. He simply rested his head upon the promise of Jesus and went to sleep.

Now the next day as he was going home some sunny faced servants met him. These doubtless rushed forward fairly shouting the good news, "Your son is alive!" This father was not as astonished as they expected him to be. His face didn't take on any new light. It already looked like a miniature sunrise. I dare say they were a bit surprised at how quietly he took it. Instead of shouting over it, he simply asked "What hour did he begin to mend?" And they gave this amazing answer, "He didn't begin to mend, he just got well. Yesterday at one o'clock he was burning with fever, and yesterday at one o'clock his fever left him and he was well. It was instantaneous." How

Now our Lord sometimes heals that way today. He heals both instantaneously, and as a process. Years ago as a young teacher, I boarded in a country home where the Mother, a
nominal Christian, became ill with a lingering sickness. When the doctors seemed baffled, she began to pray for her own recovery, but got no where. Then she began to plead that she might live in order to mother her four growing boys. Still she got no where. Then one day, in a moment of high faith, she said, "Lord, the boys were yours before they were mine. I trust them and all else into thy hands. Thy will be done."

So what? That very hour she rose into newness of life. I can give my personal testimony that from that day she moved about that little community like a rich and rare perfume for the beauty of the Lord God rested upon her, as the sunshine rested on the hills.

ACT III

The next scene is his reaching home. I can imagine that when these servants had met the master one of them turned on his heels and hurried home to tell the household of the master's coming. When this official arrived they were all out to meet him. Among those of course was his small boy now fit and well. As the father ran forward and lifted him into his arms he knew the joy not only of having recovered his boy as a fresh gift from Jesus, but receiving the Giver as well.

"So when they were in the house, all gathered about this father as he told his story. "Now," he said, "the man who did that for me, who led me from a vague faith to be sure of Him, that man can have my life now and forever!" So joyous and contagious was his faith that every member of his household was caught under its spell. Thus it was that the most important institution on the face of this earth was established, a Christian home.
The one who made this possible was a father who began with a vague faith, but because he was loyal to what he believed, was led into a larger faith. There is nothing truer than this, that if we live up to the light we have, it will lead us into the fullness of the light. But however bright may be the vision now, if we fail to live up to it, it will change to darkness. "For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Here is the open road to victory. "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him". That same Jesus has and is speaking to you and me. He is saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." He is promising "Him that cometh with me I will in no wise cast out". All you need to do is to take Him at His word and go your joyous way.
I have called my subject this evening "The Great Adventure." Life is full of adventures. A man who refuses to venture will never win. If you risk nothing you will certainly gain nothing. Every man who wins largely must venture largely.

Now, every single sensible venture that a man makes he makes through faith. Don't get scared now, don't get it into your mind that I am going to dish out to you a lot of stale and moss grown theology. When a man speaks of faith he is speaking of about the newest and most modern essential in this world. He is speaking of that which is absolutely necessary in the here and now. He is speaking also of the golden key that opens the palace of eternity.

All faith has in it an element of venture. Unless it has this element it is not faith at all. When you proposed to your wife you promised that if she would go with you, if she would give up her name for yours you could be more to her than father and mother. You could be more to her than the old home with all its home joys and home associations. You promised that you could be more to her than all else besides. And she believed you, she believed you so completely that she took the risk, that she made the venture. I hope she has not been disappointed.

Now, the woman who ventures in this direction makes a great venture. But the supreme adventure is not here. The supreme venture is not when a man stakes his fortune upon a certain financial enterprise. The supreme adventure is when a man stakes his all, his time and his eternity, upon the Word of Jesus Christ. It is such a venture that we find recorded in this wonderful story.

Let us look at it together. A certain young preacher has gone out from his native city of Nazareth in Galilee up to the great religious capital, Jerusalem. In this staid old city he produces no small stir. He does a number of deeds that are altogether unconventional. Among other things he seized a piece of rope with which somebody had driven some sheep to market and whipped a lot of money grubbers out of the temple with it. Besides this he has preached with marvelous power. He has also opened blinded eyes and healed many that were sick.

So great an impression has he made that a certain old gray beard, conspicuous for learning and dignity, has made his way in the night to the young preacher's humble abode and has asked for the secret of life at his hands. He has asked and has been met with that startling and revolutionary statement that a man may, and must be, born again.

Now, this young prophet has returned to his native Galilee. The people about home had not thought much of him before, but they are a little more interested because of the great fame he has won up at Jerusalem. No sooner had he returned than a certain nobleman who lived twenty miles away at Capernaum hurried to see him.

You see this nobleman had heard of him. He had heard of the deeds that he had wrought. He had heard something of the words that he had spoken. He had heard something of the marvelous power that he exercised, and though his faith was a very imperfect something, he believed these
The great adventure

reports, at least he believed them enough to venture something on them. They brought about action. He went on the strength of that faith and sought Jesus out and made to Him his prayer.

That was a bit of adventure in itself, for this man had royal blood in his veins and Jesus was a peasant. This man was a man about court and Jesus was an artizan, a man with the calloused palms of a carpenter. And yet he dared to come to Jesus, he ventured to humiliate himself by coming and presenting his petition to this young rabbi, who a few weeks before was utterly obscure and unknown.

The thing that thus made him venture on his faith in Jesus was the fact that he was in trouble. He was a nobleman, I know, but he had more heartache than he knew what to do with. He lived in a palace but his eyes were not unacquainted with tears. He was a man of a certain kind of power but he was face to face at this moment with an antagonist in whose hands he was utterly weak. He was fighting a few against whom all his resources counted for naked nothing. He is under the burden of a great need.

And I dare hope that some of us are feeling that same way at this moment. I hope you have not come into God's house this first Sunday evening of the New Year feeling that you have no need. I hope you have not come to pray the prayer of the Pharisee. I trust rather that you have come wishing, longing, even expecting to find help to a better life. Have you come realizing that there is a power of evil within you that you cannot conquer in your own strength? Have you come sensible of the fact that there are immortal hungers within your heart that can only be satisfied by the Bread of Life? Have you come conscious of the fact that you are tormented by unslaked thirsts that can only be slaked by the stream that makes glad the City of God? If so, this may prove a blessed hour for you, an hour when you for yourself will make the great adventure.

This man was in trouble. At the beginning he was not so keenly conscious of his own personal needs as he was of the needs of his boy. His child was sick. And that child had put its arms around his very heart and he loved him with a passionate tenderness. And I think there is something beautiful in this father bestirring himself, humbling himself at the Master's feet for the sake of his boy.

I wonder if there is not somewhere a mother who is praying for you tonight. I wonder if there is not somewhere a mother whose last waking thought this New Year's night will be of you and her last waking prayer a sob to God for your salvation. This man was a father and the love for his son sent him to Christ.

Now, it is the mother who gets all the credit for tenderness and devotion, and far be it from me to take one single ray from the luster of her crown, but I would like, as I have said before, to give a little tin halo to father. I think he would appreciate it. Do you remember almost three years ago now we tried to celebrate "Father's Day", and there were no songs to sing for him except "Everybody Works but Father"? But for mother there were slushy, soulful songs enough, and we can not say anything too tender about mother, and our eyes can not be too big with unshed tears over her kindness and love. But I do think we ought to give dear old daddy a little more credit than he gets.

A physician found a man dying in Denver, Colorado a few years
The great adventure

ago. His case puzzled the physician very much. After a careful examination he said to him, "You haven't a single organic trouble in the world. You are not sick and yet you are dying. Have you had some great sorrow?" And the man answered, "Yes, I am dying of a broken heart. My family do not know where I am today. My boy murdered a man and I took his crime on me. I am dead to all but him and he has never thanked me." The beauty about the story of this nobleman is this, that the need of his boy sent him to God. The danger that threatened his child made him throw himself on his face at the feet of Jesus. I wonder what kind of chance your boy has at Christ. I wonder what kind of chance your girl has. I wonder if you are rearing them in an atmosphere that is sweetened with the breath of prayer. I wonder if you are going to send them out into the world by and by with the moral support that comes from the memory of a godly father and a godly mother. Oh, if you will not interest yourself in Jesus because of your own needs then be interested because of the needs of your children.

I remember an unsaved man whom I went to see years ago. He was a merchant. I do not think I have ever seen a man any more timid on the question of religion. I fancy that if he had had a bale of cotton he would have almost have undertaken to have wrapped it up when he saw me coming. He always made such a frantic effort to be busy. But one time I got him to church and I preached that night on hell. And when I spoke of those who would certainly be lost I mentioned that man who allowed his child to hang his innocent feet in his old ragged life and stagger out into sin here and into a godless eternity by and by as the one who would certainly be lost. And God used that sermon to bring that man to Christ. And this man face to face with a need that he could not meet, came to Jesus when he heard that Jesus was near. He came to Him and prayed. And now I wonder if the immediate presence of Christ here this evening will lead you to pray. Maybe it has been a long time since you prayed. Maybe you have not uttered a prayer since the hand that is now dust was put on your head. Maybe you have not prayed since you said, "Now I lay me" at the old home place. But Jesus has drawn near this evening and this is the first Sunday of the New Year. Suppose you begin it by bowing head and heart in the presence of your Lord to pray. Suppose you ask Him for what your life most deeply needs tonight.

Yes, this man prayed. He told Jesus that his boy was sick and asked Him to come down and heal him. Now, the response of Jesus to this prayer is rather startling. It seems at first very like a rebuke and close akin to a refusal. He said, "Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

Jesus has read his heart. He saw that while the nobleman had a little faith in him yet his main faith was upon signs and wonders. He wanted evidences. He had his mind made up as to the way in which Jesus was to heal his boy. Unless Jesus went down with him and went through that ceremony that he had made out in his own mind then he would not trust him.

Isn't that human? Isn't that just like you and just like me and just like almost all the rest of us? We are so much more ready to trust our own feelings and our own emotions and our own senses than we are to trust Jesus. Why are you not a Christian? You have never had the right kind of feeling. I could not tell you how many times I have had that answer. That means that you are going to trust in your own emotions rather than in the promises of God.
Do you remember the story of Namaan? Namaan had leprosy you know and he went down to see Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, in order to get cured. On his way he made up his mind as to how the Lord was going to cure him. The prophet was going to come out and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper. But it did not happen that way. Instead the prophet told him to go down and dip in Jordan seven times. And that made the old general so angry that he was on the point of going hom.

Oh heart, remember it is Christ that saves and He is going to do it in His own way. He doesn't need you and me to tell Him how. The truth of the matter is, I do not know how He is going to save you, and I do not know how you will feel when you get saved. I only know this, that save you He will if you will give Him a chance.

Now, fortunately for this nobleman in his deep earnestness he decided to let Christ have His way. And so he responds by saying, "Come down ere my child die", seeming to say, "Lord, I will put the case in your hands absolutely. I am perfectly willing to let thee save him in thine own way. I will not try to dictate terms. I will lay him in unconditional surrender in thine own Everlasting Arms."

And when the nobleman did that what happened? That which always happens, Christ took the case and brought victory and said to this man, "Go. Thy son liveth."

What did the nobleman do then? I know what a great many of us do. We go right on praying. That is what many of you would have done if you had been in this nobleman's place, you would have just continued asking the Lord to do for you what He had already promised that He had done.

I was in a meeting sometime ago and talked to a young fellow at the altar, gave him God's sure promise and asked him if he believed it, and he declared that he did. And then somebody shouted and he said, "I want that kind of religion," and went right on seeking for a salvation that God had already told him that he had.

This nobleman acted with real wisdom. "Thy son liveth", said the Lord. "All right", said the nobleman, "I will take your word." And he made the venture. He staked his boy's life, he staked his own happiness on that promise. He ventured his all on it and went away satisfied. What was it that brought the victory? Jesus Christ gave him a promise. And the nobleman took that promise as truth, stood on it, believed it — and that is the Gospel in its sweet simplicity.

The men who have found God, the men who have proved themselves mighty in His service have been men who believed in Him enough to venture something for Him. Yonder is a man leaving Ur of the Chaldees to journey into the unknown. "Where are you going, Abraham?" "I do not know. I have heard the voice that bade me get out from my kindred and from my father's house into another land, and I am a pilgrim into the unknown. I am the world's first great pioneer. I am staking my future, I am staking my own life and that of those I love on the trustworthiness of God." He believed Him enough to venture for Him.

And here is a marvelous story. A man of 80 is feeding sheep at the backside of a desert one day. And he sees a bush aflame with God. And a few days after that he takes his staff in his hand and goes to invade the mightiest nation in the world. Why does he do it? He is betting his life that God is true and that He will go with him and give him the victory according to His promise.
Yonder is a little vessel in the midst of the sea. The storm king is in a rage. The sea is being whipped into foam. To add to the terrors of the night a specter shape is seen stepping from wave to wave and his form shows ghastly in the flare of the lightning. Those on board the vessel cry out for fear. Then a voice of authority and power says, "Be not afraid. It is I." At once the terror is changed to boldness. And Peter is saying, "Lord, if it be thou bid me come to thee on the water." And Jesus said, "Come." And Peter makes the venture. Like these other heroes he bets his life that the word of Jesus is true.

And so this man with the promise of Christ in his heart went away satisfied. I met him on his trip to see Jesus. I have never seen a man look more woe begone and when I asked him what was the matter he fought hard with his tears and he said, "My child is dying. When I left the fever was parching. When I left the physician had given up hope. When I left his mother was in an agony of grief. When I left he was just swinging like a pendulum between life and death. There is no chance for him unless I get help here, and I am so afraid that I can not get it."

Then I saw him after this interview with Jesus. And his face was so bright and sunny that I hardly knew him. And I said, "Hello old fellow, how is the boy? When did you see him last?" And he said, "I have not seen him since I left yesterday but he is all right." "All right? How do you know? Have any of the servants come to tell you?" "No." "Have you had any message from him at all?" "No. I know nothing about him at all except what the Master said. He said he was alive. He told me he was going to live. If he dies Heaven's King has gone back on His word. I am not the least uneasy." Now, that is faith.

And I have seen just that sort of faith again and again. I have seen it even in relation to the sick. (Owens and the child with membraneous croup.)

Now, any man that will take Jesus at His word as this man did will no more be disappointed than he was. How many times I have seen that tried. Jesus Christ says to you, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." What is your part? Simply to come and to trust Him to do the rest. He says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What is your part? To take Him at His word. That is the greatest honor you can do Him. Just to believe what He says.

I was holding a meeting some years ago in an out of the way community where they had almost no workers at all. I invited the unsaved to the altar and among those who came was a magnificent young fellow, a university graduate. There was not a tear in his eye nor was there the least sight of emotion. I had been reared in an atmosphere where the emotion in religion counted for everything and I was a little uneasy about this man.

So I said to him, "Old fellow, will you accept Christ if I tell you how?" And very honestly and frankly he said to me, "Most certainly I will." Then I said, "If I offered you $5 to pop your fingers and you popped them you would have the right to claim the money, wouldn't you?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "If Christ lays down a condition for your salvation and you meet that condition you have a right to claim the salvation that He offers. Isn't that right?" And he said, "It is." "Well", I said, "This is the condition, 'If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'
Are you willing to come with that confession on your lips and in your heart, of course making that confession with the determination to forsake your sins?" He said, "I am willing." I said "Then since you have done your part will you depend on God to do His?" He said, "Is that all?" I said, "It is." He said, "I will do it." And he turned to the man that sat beside him at the altar who was also seeking salvation and began at once to explain the way of life to him. And he became a power for Christ in that community.

Let me bring you face to face with this fact once again, Christ has already provided salvation for you. What He wants you to do is to claim it. Take hold of what is your own. He is not wanting your prayers first of all. He is not wanting long days of agony. He is wanting you. He is waiting for you to come to Him, believe what He said, venture on Him, that and nothing more. For you are not saved because you feel good and you are not saved because you feel bad. You are saved by trusting in Jesus.

I know it would have been very easy for the devil to have argued many of us out of our blessing if we had been in this nobleman's position. There he is going away home perfectly satisfied, absolutely confident that it is all right with his boy, and yet he has not one iota of evidence in the world except the word of Jesus Christ. I ask him, "What is the philosophy of the business? How do you think that Jesus Christ can cure your boy and never get in 20 miles or him?" And he says, "I don't philosophize about it, I just believe what He said because He said it."

Do you remember that Old Testament story how that when the Israelites were in the wilderness there came among them poisonous serpents whose bite was deadly. People were dying on every hand and Moses asked the Lord to provide a remedy. In response to his prayer He told Moses to make a brazen serpent and put it on a pole, and that whoever was bitten had only to look at that serpent in order to be healed. And so it was that the next day when there was a wild shriek and a certain poor fellow felt the venom of death flowing through his veins he turned his lack luster eyes to that uplifted serpent and was healed. Not that the serpent healed him but that God healed him in response to his look or faith.

And I am sure that not all those who were bitten were healed. Some of them made up their minds possibly that they would get well anyway. And some of them said that they could not see the philosophy of it anyway and so they died trying to figure out just how it had happened. And so men do today hearing the voice of Jesus Christ ringing in their ears, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." But we refuse to look because there are mysteries. Remember heart, the mysteries are all on God's part. Your part is the sweet simplicity that is within the reach even of the hands of a little child.

And now I wonder if you will not so venture on Christ tonight. I wonder if you will not make this supreme adventure. He said, "Ask and it shall be given you." Will you not ask even now? He said, "Seek and you shall find." Will you not seek at this very moment? "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Will you not knock even if ever so feebly, for if you do He will fling wide to you the gates of the Life Everlasting.

And remember this, that to fail to make this venture on God is to
miss salvation now and to miss it forever more. What was the matter with
those ten spies that went into Canaan? They would not take God at His
word. That was it. God had told them, "The land is yours. Go up and
possess it." But they believed in giants more than they believed in God,
and because they did they had no uplifting and holy self esteem. They had
no respect for themselves, no sense of their own value. Because they be­
lieved in the giants more than God they would not venture anything. They
were not willing to fight. Caleb and Joshua were men of faith, which
simply means that they were willing to bet their lives that God would make
good His promise that He had made to them.

It is good to see this man on his way back home. It is good to
see the elasticity that is in his step once more and the gladness that is
in His face and the sparkle that is in his eye. How much shorter the
journey seems going back than it did when he came up. He is going away
with a light and glad heart.

Now, just as he rounded a bend in the road he saw some men coming
toward him. And as they draw nearer he recognizes them as his own ser­
vants. They themselves are sunny also. And they hurry to him and all
try to speak to him at the same time. And they say to him just what the
Master had said to him on yesterday: "Thy son liveth." "When did he re­
cover", said the nobleman without surprise. "Yesterday at one o'clock
the fever left him." "Yesterday at one o'clock", said the nobleman, "and
that was the very hour in which I bowed before Jesus Christ." And the man
has in addition to his faith a positive assurance of the truth that his
prayer has been answered.

And that brings us face to face with a blessed doctrine
that can never grow old. If a man will really trust Christ, if a man
will take God's promise and stand upon it without feeling, without
emotion, stand upon it whether amidst laughter or tears, whether amidst
sunshine or shadow, - one day sooner or later there will come to him a
positive assurance of the truth of what he has believed. "For the Spirit
Himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of
God."

That my friends, is one of the blessed doctrines that remade the
world. When Wesley came out of that little service in Aldersgate St.,
London, what did he say? "An assurance was given unto me." It is your
privilege not only to be saved, but to know yourself saved. It is your
privilege to be conscious of your salvation, to be assured of it. It
is your privilege to be as certain of Jesus Christ as you are of any
earthly friend. I do not say that this will come to you the moment you
trust in Jesus. I do not say when it will come, but come it will if in
simple faith you will stand on His promise.

And I am wondering if there are not those here at this very moment
that are willing simply to take Christ at His word. The moment you do
that Christ will save you. It may be that that very moment He will give
you an assurance of salvation. That is not always so though the assur­
ance will come sometime. But the big privilege is to be saved, is to
claim what He has given you at the price of His own blood.

Do you remember the story of how one day Napoleon's horse became
unruly and a private stepped out from the ranks and gripped him by the
bits and held him. And Napoleon looked down into the face of the private
and said, "Thank you, Captain." And the private knew what that meant. It
meant promotion. But many a man would have gone on back in the ranks and never have said a word or maybe would have appealed to the general in later days. But this bold fellow said, "Of what regiment, Sire?"

And Napoleon then and there named the regiment and the man claimed his own. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Will you take that promise as your own? I shall never forget a blessed chapter in my own history. Life had grown lean and mean and there was no fire and no appeal in my ministry. And I picked out one blessed promise out of God's Word and spread it out before me. And then I said to my own heart, "This is either true or it is not true. How will you take it?"

And I answered, "I will take it as true." And I rose from my knees not with any thrill of emotion but with the same satisfaction that this nobleman had, that what I had asked was granted. It never occurred to me at that time to think of my emotions though a little later there came to me the thrill of the glad consciousness that God had touched me.

And heart, this blessing is for you. Will you claim it? Will you claim it tonight? You will gain nothing by waiting. You may lose everything. The story of this service will soon be written. When those who love you that have passed into the King's presence lean over the shoulder of the Recording Angel to read what he has entered in his book with regard to this service, may they read this entry: "And he believed the word that Jesus had spoken."
asking you the same question tonight: "Wilt thou be made whole?" He is
ingling you out, pointing His finger at you, looking wistfully and hope­
fully and yearningly into your face. And what He is saying is: "Would
you like to be made whole?"

Is your life counting for the things for which it ought to
count? Are you racing in the direction in which you know you ought to
face? I am not asking you if you have attained all that you desire to
attain. Of course you have not done that. If you have, you are hopeless
indeed. If you do not see the infinite heights beyond you, then there is
no chance for you.

But I am asking you this question: Are you racing the way you
ought to face? Are you traveling in the direction that you ought to
travel? For after all, the biggest question about any of us is not how
good we are or how bad we are. The big question is not how far we have
climbed toward Heaven or how far our road is bent toward hell. The big
question is the direction of life. If you keep on the way in which you
are traveling, where are you going to be when the sundown comes and the
night is on?

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Are you conscious tonight of the
fact that you ought to be other than you are, that you ought to be better
than you are? The Young Ruler was moral. He was clean. He was religious.
But he knew there was something wrong with him. He knew he was not whole.
He knew he was not traveling toward the heights. He knew he was not on the
right road. Do you know that? If you do, will you not get on the right
road tonight? Whatever others may do, 'wilt thou be made whole'?

This question not only implied that the man was wrong, that the
man was not whole; it implied also a willingness on the part of Christ to
help him. I am sure the man felt that that was true. If it were not true,
His question would have been an altogether heartless question. Did you ever
see a boy ask a dog if he wanted a piece of bread and after having him
jump for it, end by eating it himself? It is not a kind thing to do. And
this man felt as Jesus asked the question, that here was a man at last that
wished him well, that was willing to do him a service.

It is a good day for you and me when we realize that Christ
yearns to do the best possible for every one of us. There is nothing, I
think, of which we can be surer than this; That our Lord wants to bless us,
that He wants to enrich our lives, that He wants to snap our fetters, that
He wants to break down the door of our prison house and lead us out into
the light. The tender promises of Jesus, the sweat of Gethsemane, the blood
of the Cross, all tell in unmistakable language that Jesus Christ wants to
make us whole.

The question not only implied willingness, but it also implies
power. This man, as long as he had lain there, as desperate and despairful
as he had become, was made to feel that here is a man who is not only will­
ing to help, but here is a man who has power to help. Here at last is one who
is mighty to undertake my case and do something for me that nobody else has
been willing or been able to do.

And Christ is able also to help you. Whatever may be your diffi­
culty, whatever may be your perplexity, whatever may be your burden, what­
ever may be your need - Christ is able to meet the supreme need of your
life, the need of a Savior who is able to be to you bread and water, light and life, who is able to supply all your needs according to His riches in glory.

And, last of all, this question implies that whether or not the man is healed depends upon himself: "Wilt thou be made whole?" It means if you will to be you can be. And if you do not will to be you can not be. Christ will not and can not save any man who does not want to be saved. He can not cure anybody who does not want to be cured. But if He can only get us to be willing, then the cure is absolutely sure.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" And the man can not for the life of him see how it can ever come to pass. He begins to tell Christ how utterly impossible it is for him to be cured. And yet there is hope in his heart. He can not but feel that here is a chance for him, wonderful and undreamed of. Every man can be cured if he wills to be. This man was cured and I know of no case more hopeless.

How was the cure wrought? While the man was telling how utterly hopeless his case was, Jesus gave him this strange command: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." First, "Arise." Why that was the very thing that the man could not do. It was the one big impossibility in his life.

And that, my friend, is where Christ is always making His attack. That is the very thing He is forever commanding us to do. He calls on us for the impossible. The man with the withered hand was asked to "stretch forth his hand." It was the only thing that he could not do. Christ calls on us for impossibilities. He tells us to pray for our enemies. He tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves, things that in our own strength we could never accomplish.

He not only calls upon us for impossibilities, but He makes the impossible possible. If He can only get us to will as He wills, then all impossibilities vanish. When the Prodigal says, "I will arise and go", then it is that he is brought at once into the radiant warmth of his father's house. When a man wills to arise, God makes it possible for him to arise. Believe me, Christ is able to get every one of us upon our feet if we are only willing that He should lift us up and save us.

He did not only tell this man to arise, but He told him to take up his bed. Now, what does that mean? It means this: That he is not to make any provision for going back to the old life. Suppose when he had got upon his feet, he had said, "I will just leave this old pallet here by the pool. I may be sick again tomorrow and I will have it here to fall back on." Had he started out in that spirit he would have been back on it before tomorrow.

How many times I have had people who had recently been converted to say to me, "I am not going to join the church yet. I am going to wait a while and see how I get along. I am going to see how I hold out." And whenever they say that I know they are already looking wistfully back to the old life. They are already making them a delightful little pallet to lie down upon when they relapse.

Did you ever have a friend who stopped using tobacco and yet you found him three days later with half a plug in his pocket, and when you reminded him that he had quit and asked him what this half plug meant,
he told you that he had quit, but that he only had that piece in his pocket to smell? And you know right at once that the man who keeps a piece to smell will soon be keeping it to chew.

"Take up thy bed." Make no provision for going back. Turn your face toward the future. Then comes the next word: "Walk." And what an important command that is! Listen to it again: "Walk." On, my friend, if you are thinking of becoming a Christian, enter into the fellowship of the Church with the purpose of walking. Don't be that type of Christian that has to always be carried. Don't be a moral invalid. Don't be a spiritual baby. Don't be a burden, an encumbrance. Walk.

Don't expect anybody to do your part of the paying. Don't try to dead-bat your way into the Kingdom. Don't expect anybody to do your part of the praying or the singing or the working. Walk. Don't require to be petted and fondled and coddled. Don't go around with a chip on your shoulder. Don't cultivate a super-sensitiveness. Now, I love church folks above all else in the world. But here and there I find them that never have learned to walk. They still want to be carried by the preacher or somebody else. Every church ought to have a nursery with a lot of to teach some of its members how to walk.

Then there are those who when they have learned, still like to be carried, especially if they get a little tired or a little hurt or if they fall down. Believe me, the church has enough cry babies. It has a plenty of folks who soil their white garments by crawling in the muck of things. If you are in the church, walk. If you intend to come into the church, come with the purpose of walking.

Now, this man did as Christ said; he gathered his bed and began to walk. He started out well, but he met opposition, just as you do, just as we all do. There were churchmen in that city who were horrified that he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath.

They questioned him and he gave a most intelligent answer. He said, "The man who cured me told me to take up my bed and walk." It is perfectly right and reasonable that the Christ who saves us shall have the command of our lives after He has saved us. But I think what this man meant by his answer was, "I am not responsible. Don't blame me. Blame the one that cured me."

Then the Jews asked not who had cured him, but who told him to take up his bed and walk. And the fellow didn't know. He was so absorbed in the gift that he forgot the Giver. There are scores of folks like that in every church, in every community, people who accept a thousand blessings at the hand of Christ but forget Christ Himself. He didn't know who had cured him. Had he known, he would have gladly told, if for no other reason than to save himself from any responsibility in the matter.

Later Jesus, knowing his weakness, seeing also the insistent disloyalty in his heart, sought him out and found him and gave him this stern and solemn warning: "Sin no more lest a worse thing come to thee." It is a dreadful word. It means, first of all, that all those wasted years had come about because of the man's sin. It was not God's fault that he had lived his life to no purpose. It was not God's fault that he was likely to die without ever having really lived. It was his own fault. It had come about as a result of his sin.
It also meant that sin was to be avoided henceforth. It meant that a worse thing would come to him. That is startling language indeed. A worse thing - worse than what? Worse than 38 wasted years. Worse than a whole lifetime on the cinder pile. Worse than almost half a century flat on your back through sin. A worse thing. What is that worse thing? What is a worse thing than a wasted life? What is a worse thing than a life without God unless it be an eternity without Him?

And this man, with this awful and solemn warning ringing in his soul, turned and went away and relieved himself of all responsibility for his Sabbath desecration by exposing his benefactor to His enemies. And I very much fear that this worse thing really happened to this poor, cowardly Judas.

My friend, if you are here tonight as a member of the Church, let me leave this word upon your heart: Walk. Make a business of being a Christian. Make a business of a clean walk and a right life. Don't lie down. Don't shirk. Don't crawl. Stand on your feet and walk. Give an account of yourself. Take some part of the responsibilities of the Kingdom and of the Church.

If you are here facing away from Jesus, let me press home this question: "Will you be made whole?" Do you want to know Him. He is willing. He is able to reveal Himself. It all depends on you. I remember a man who came out of the Massachusetts prison while I was a student at Harvard University. When he was imprisoned he was one of the best electricians of his day. He stayed in prison for some 30 years. When he came out the world had passed by him. His chances had gone and he died without ever having really lived. And that is your danger, that you will ignore Christ, and that ignoring Him, you will miss the best and will come to the end of the day without having in the fullest and largest sense ever lived. For this reason I press home this question: "Wilt thou be made whole?"

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"And there sat he satisfied."

CGC:ER 1. 38 years - chance erased
2. Judas saw Jesus know
   1. The first wrecking machine
   2. The morning carpet
   3. Dr. Barnardo
   4. He went, so were
   Bruce Osmer"
"Wilt thou be made whole."

Here is a story that is likely to live forever. It will do so because it is so refreshingly full of life. It is a sabbath in Jerusalem. The pious worshipers are thronging the streets on their way to the temple. But Jesus is not among the throng. He rather turns His face toward a place where He knows the need is greatest. He goes down to a porch by the sheep gate where there is a multitude of sick and blind and withered. He goes among those who are at the rear of the procession.

Not only does He put Himself among this congregation of despairing folks. He seems to single out the most hopeless and disconsolate wretch of them all. He finds a man who has been out of the race, lying flat of his back for thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years is a long time. It is a long time for one who is well. It is a doubly long time for one who is sick. It is longer still for one who is sick without friends.

Such was the situation of this paralyzed man. When he had his first stroke the few that knew him were shocked by the news of it. They came to see him. They sent him flowers. But he neither died nor got well. So the visits became further and further apart. The flowers dwindled down to nothing. Most of those who cared about him had died. The others had forgotten. They had had to hurry on in the business of life. He had ceased to count, was condemned to a kind of living death. Nobody cared anymore. He was putting nothing into life and getting, as he thought, less than nothing out of it.
But on this day of days he looked up from his worn pallet to see a stranger gazing at him with tender and hopeful eyes. This helpless invalid did not know who this stranger was, had never seen him before. But somehow his heart warmed in his presence. Then this stranger asked him a question. It was a queer-seeming question. On other lips it might have smacked of sheerest mockery. Jesus, bending His gaze upon this hopeless wretch, said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Would you like to recover your health. Would you like to stand on your feet again and play a man's part in God's world?"

I

What is implied in this question?

1. This question is a recognition of the fact that the man is not whole. That sounds like a truism, I know, but it is fundamental. "Wilt thou be made whole?" asked Jesus. The question is meaningless unless a man is sick. This same question Jesus is asking of you and me. His doing so means that we have not arrived. We are not bothered about our sin, most of us, but surely we are conscious of the fact that we have come short of the glory of God. Life is not as rich and full, abundant in joy and abundant in usefulness as it ought to be. healthy minded

This is a fact of which I dare say all are conscious that are serious with themselves. If you wish to be made more keenly conscious compare life as you are living it with the wealth of promises of the New Testament. Compare yourself with those vigorous and valiant saints that we meet upon its pages. How joyous they are, how patient in the face of difficulties, how courageous in the presence of danger, how full of love in the presence of hate, how enthusiastic in the sharing of their rich experience with others. They are
constantly laying eager hands on every passer-by to tell them the amazing good news that for them has made all life new.

2. Not only does this question imply that this man is not whole. It suggests the possibility of his being made so. Now it is evident that the man himself had given up hope. He never intended to be well again. The possibility of his standing on his feet had become incredible. And yet here is a man asking him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The fact that he is asking means that he is interested. He cares. He is not mocking. He is willing to help him. The fact that somebody cared began to stir his dead hope into life. We do not always believe in the willingness of God to help. You remember that poor leper who had been so harshly treated by life that he had lost all faith in love and said to Jesus, "If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

Not only was this poor wretch convinced of the willingness of Jesus to help, but he began even to hope that he might have power to help. Why is he asking me this question he said to himself. He is not mocking me. He really believes that I have a chance. "If Thou canst do anything," said a heart-broken father to Jesus one day. He was doubting His power. But this man is beginning to believe in that power and he was right in doing so. This question meant for him, and it means for you and me, that there are amazing possibilities within us yet, in spite of all our past failures. There is not a man present in whom Jesus does not see possibilities that are infinite. When He therefore says, "Wilt thou be made whole," He means you may be.

3. Jesus implies by this question that whether this man is made whole or not depends upon himself. The man himself did not think so. He blamed circumstances, he blames his fellows for his continued failure to recover. He tells Jesus complainingly, "I have no man when the water is stirred to put me in the pool. If anybody would
help me than I might get somewhere."

But Jesus said, "Your failure is not the fault of your fellows. It is your own fault." "It is not in our stars, dear Brutus, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." Why is it that we are spiritual dwarves when we might be spiritual giants. It is not the fault of our circumstances, it is not the fault of our fellows, it is not the fault of the church, it is the fault of ourselves. If we are ever made whole it is because we will to be. If we do not really want what God wants to give us, then it cannot be ours. Not even God can give any man what that man refuses to take.

4. This question implies finally that if a man ever recovers he must put himself in the hands of his physician. That is, he must do exactly what Jesus tells him to do. There are a lot of us who wish for things who do not get them, simply because we are not willing to pay the price. A man offered me a very fine car some years ago for the meager sum of four thousand dollars. I told him I did not want it. I did not mean by that that his car was not desirable. I did not mean that I would not have bought it for four thousand cents if he would have endowed it. All that I meant was that under the circumstances I was not willing to pay the price. And the only reason you and I are or any other man is not made whole is because we do not care to be or because we do not care for it enough to meet the conditions. If you are set on being Christlike regardless of the price, then you are sure to win as God lives.

II

Now what demands did Jesus make of this seemingly hopeless paralytic in order to his recovery? He said to him, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." His command was simple, clear-cut, straight-
forward, logical. And mark you, we must keep them in the order in which Jesus put them. He did not say, "Walk, take up thy bed and arise." That is what some of us are trying to do. I have seen a good many folks in the church who are trying with considerable earnestness to walk. But the trouble of it is they have never really gotten up. As trite as it may seem, we must not reverse the divine order. Look at them a moment.

1. Jesus said "Arise." It was a rather unreasonable command it seems, unreasonable because it was impossible. He told the man to do the one thing that he could not do. But that is what Jesus is constantly doing. He is always attacking us at the point of our impossibilities. The things you can do without Jesus you must do. He calls on us for the impossible. When He met the man with the withered hand He called on him to do the one thing he could not do and that is stretch forth his hand. He calls on us to love our enemies, to be victorious over sin, to be new creations. Left alone, these things are utterly impossible.

But though He called on this man to do what in his own strength he could not do, yet while he is complaining of the unreasonable-ness of such commands, the poor fellow is actually getting upon his feet. How did it come about? What he willed Jesus willed for him. Then the strength of the Christ entered into him and the impossible was made possible. Set the sails of your soul to catch the winds of God and you will be carried toward your desired haven. Begin where you are to obey as best you can and a new power will come into your life. For the man who is willing to do His will shall know in his own experience that the power of God is sufficient for the accomplishment of that will.

2. He told this man to take up his bed. That sounds rather strange. Why pick up the old worn mat upon which he has
lain for so many years? One wise expositor says He commanded him to take up his bed to save him from making any provision for going back to his old life. But while he stood upon his feet he had said to himself, "I am up, it is true, but I do not know how long I will be able to stand. I am going to leave my old mat there. I may need it in a little while." If he had said that he would have been flat of his back again in less than an hour.

The only way to lead a new life is to make a clean break with the old one. The only way to quit any habit is to quit it absolutely. The man who sets out to stop using tobacco but keeps a package of cigarettes in his pocket to smell or to give to his friends, will soon be smoking again. The man who desires to quit drinking but who still keeps a quart in the refrigerator as a precaution against snake-bite, is likely to be bitten inside of a very few days. The man who decides to become a Christian but who refuses to join the church till he sees how well he can stand, will soon not stand at all. "Arise" is the first command. "Take up thy bed," is the second.

3. Jesus commanded this man to walk. I like that. He had been carried long enough. There are some folks that have to be carried financially all their lives. There are still more who have to be carried spiritually. They are dead weights upon society, dead weights upon the church, dead weights upon the home. Always spiritual liabilities, never spiritual assets, they never really learn to walk.

Another called attention to a very illuminating sentence by Bernard Shaw. It is a new definition of a gentleman. "A gentleman," says Shaw, "is one who puts into life more than he takes out of it." That hits the nail squarely upon the head. We have held many false and ridiculous conceptions of what
a gentleman is. We have thought that whether one is a gentleman or not depends upon the chances of birth or upon his capacity to live without working. But to be a gentleman one must be a worker. He must put into life more than he takes out of it.

When Jesus therefore said to this man, "Walk," it was another way of saying to him, "Don't be a shirker, don't be a parasite. Be a gentleman. Insist upon carrying your end of the load, insist upon paying your part of the bills. "Walk," - count for something; be so loyal to your duties and obligations and privileges that when you slip out of life there will be those that miss you; that when you fall there will be left a lonely place against the sky.

III

In the face, then, of what is involved in this question I press it home to your own heart. It it not a question for the crowd. It is a question for the individual. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do you really want to live up to this gentleman's creed. Do you really wish to put more into this life than you get out of it? Do you wish to play your part in the world of men in a manful and Christlike way? Do you wish it enough to pay the price? If so I bring you this eternal call, "Arise," make a present beginning, "take up thy bed," make a clean break with the old life of failure, "Walk," put into life more than you take out of it.
"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." (John 5:7)

Beside a certain pool in the city of Jerusalem there lay on this Sabbath day a multitude of invalids. This particular pool was a kind of mineral well whose waters bubbled periodically.

There was a tradition that this bubbling was caused by an angel stirring the water. There was also a conviction that whatever sick body got into the pool first after the bubbling of the water was made well. No doubt there were many cures not because that the water had healing power but because of the faith of the one who was healed. On this particular Sabbath Jesus walked among these sick folks as he thus visited them. His keen eye picked out the most hopeless man in all that despairing and suffering crowd.

This man had lain flat of his back for thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years is a long period out of anybody's life. It is long when we are strong and well and in the thick of the fight. It is doubly long when one is sick. It is longer still when one is sick and without friends and without hope of recovery. This man was where he is it would seem because of his own sin.

He was reaping the harvest of a misspent youth. When he was first stricken his friends doubtless rallied to him. They paid him visits. They sent flowers. But as the weeks wore into months and the months into years, he neither died nor got well. His friends died or moved away or forgot. Until now he is not only sick but sick and alone. As we read his story it
fairly sobs with the desolation of a man who faces his fate not bravely but whiningly. Here is a man whose personality has rotted down. It has disintegrated through despair and self-pity.

Now it was to this man without heart and without hope that Jesus gave his attention. Suddenly this poor creature sorrowing in his self-pity found himself being searched by the keenest and most kindly eyes into which he had ever looked. And this stranger—for Jesus was a stranger to this sick man—was asking him a question. On the surface it seems a queer question. It would almost seem to have a touch of mockery in it. Here is the question: "Wilt thou be made whole?" In other words, "Would you like to get well? Would you like to stand upon your feet once more and play a part in God's world?"

I

What did Jesus mean by such a question?

1. First, he was facing the fact with this despairing man that there was something wrong. Jesus would have forfeited his confidence if he had shut his eyes to the fact that this sufferer was not whole. Not only so but he would have aroused his resentment. There are a few things that a sick person resents much more than the quiet assumption on the part of the well that they are not sick. Often their sickness is only mental. But even when this is the case they resent such assumption none the less. Jesus is saying: "There is something wrong with you. You know it and I know it."

Now the assumption implied in this question is a fundamental truth of the Bible. The whole book is written on the assumption that man left alone does not arrive. There is something wrong with us individually. I am not now arguing that you have been guilty of some ghastly and ugly sin. I am saying what every man knows and that is that you have not arrived. You are not living as richly as you might live. The sin of all sins is the failure
weariness and by eating the bread himself. We resent such unkindness even
to a dog.

What then did Jesus mean? He meant, 'I am interested in you, I am
eager to help you.' We do not always believe that. Once a leper with whom
life had dealt most harshly threw himself at the feet of Jesus with this im-
perfect prayer upon his lips: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean."
He was sure of the power of Jesus but not sure of his willingness. This
question helped to convince this sick man of the willingness of Jesus. It
helped to convince him not only of his willingness but of his power. There
was another man who came to Jesus who was sure of his willingness but not
of his power. You remember how he brought to the Master his afflicted boy.
He said, "If thou canst do anything, have mercy upon us and help us." And
Jesus answered: "The 'if' is not with me; it is with you." "If thou canst
believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." So Jesus, search-
ing the soul of this sick man, means to say, "I am interested in you. I am
able to help you. There is hope for one even as hopeless as you."

3. Not only did Jesus imply that the man was sick and that he could be
made well, he implied also that if he is to be made well he must be willing.
Of course, if this man has no desire for healing, if he prefers to lie here
in disintegrating self-pity until the very end then our Lord can do nothing
for him. Not even God can save a man against his will. Our Lord never
posches upon the sacred precincts of personality. Before the heart's door
of the sickest he stands and knocks. He will not and cannot crash the door.
If you are not willing to be different from what you are, if you do not
care for the feast of the fullness of life then it will not and cannot be
yours.

The truth is that nobody can give us what we are not willing to receive.
I have known parents to expose their sons and daughters to the best possible
opportunities for education but those opportunities were spurned. I cannot even give a beggar a coin if the beggar will not receive it. "This
"Don't Pity Yourself"

is my body," said Jesus, by which he meant, "This is myself, my best, my all, that is given for you." But that gift cannot be ours unless we would accept it. "If you are willing to be made whole," said Jesus, "you can be. All you have to do is to receive what I am willing to give."

4. Not only must this man be willing to be made whole, he must be so willing that he will put his case unreservedly in the hands of Jesus. He must be willing enough to do as he is told. Christ is the way of life for the individual and for the world. We are never going to find healing for the individual or for the nations except according to his plan. If you really care for healing then you must put yourself unreservedly into his hands. That is what you did when a sudden attack of appendicitis made an operation necessary. You put yourself into the hands of the physician, took an anesthetic, and became as utterly insensible to what was going on as if you were dead. That same giving yourself unreservedly to Christ will bring holiness.

When Jesus asked this question then he is implying that we have not arrived, that we can arrive because he is willing and able to help. He is implying also that if we do arrive it is because we desire holiness so much that we are willing to obey without reservation.

II

Now what did this paralyzed man make to the question of Jesus? "Sir," he said, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

1. He is saying first of all, "I am not whole. You are right about that. I never can be whole." This is saying some bit of hope is kindled in his heart at the presence of this man who is questioning him. I will go on being a hopeless sufferer to the end, but I want you to understand that the fact that I am not cured is no fault of mine. I am willing to be cured.
I would do anything but I am hopeless and helpless.

You can see how this man is ready to blame everybody but himself. He is not a victim of his own folly, he is just unfortunate. Circumstances are to blame. The heartlessness of the people about him is to blame. Practically everything, everybody including God is to blame except himself.

But Jesus makes us see that the man is not telling the truth. It may be true that this sick man has worn out the patience of all his friends, that nobody is willing any longer to give him a chance. Yet Jesus is saying, "You don't have to remain as you are. If you do remain as you are, if you are not made whole it will be your own fault. No man can keep any of us from the feast of the fullness of life except ourselves. This man is so shot through with self-pity that he is on the point of passing up his chance without even an effort.

III

But Jesus breaks in upon his whine with a three-fold command. Right while this man is telling how impossible it is for him ever to be different, Jesus is getting him on his feet. "Rise," he commands with authority, "take up thy bed and walk." The order of these words is logical. As another has pointed out, we must not reverse them. Some folks try to say it in this way: "Walk, take up your bed and rise." But we must rise before we can walk. For one to undertake to walk while lying flat upon his back is only to kick. Let's follow the order in which the command is given.

1. First, "Rise." But that is the very thing that the man cannot do. Jesus is calling on him for the impossible. But that is always his point of attack. One day when he went into the synagogue he found a man with his right hand withered. "Stretch forth thy hand," he commanded. Why the hand that is withered? The man could stretch forth the other without any special command. My special sin may not be yours. God is not calling on most of
so often he would burn up his pipe or throw his plug of chewing tobacco into the river. But when his wife would go through his pockets she would usually find at least a half a plug that he had kept not to chew but just to smell. There was another friend who swore off from liquor but he kept a quart about the house as a safeguard against snakebite. No, we do not get on that way. The only way to quit any habit is to quit it. The only way to become a Christian is to make a clean break with the past. Whenever a man tells me, "I am going to be a Christian, but I am not going to join the church right now, I am going to wait to see if I can hold out," I know he that even then is spreading out his mat, ready to go back to his old life.

3. "Walk." Why the word? For years this man had been carried. For years his fellows had had to help him. He had not been able to help them. This word 'walk' might be translated 'work.' Stand on your own feet. Do something for somebody else. But something into life instead of just taking something out. The best salvation from doing the wrong thing is to get so busy doing the right that you haven't time for the wrong. "This I say: walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

How then shall we become our best? We only do it by making a beginning and by constantly facing forward. So long as we excuse ourselves, so long as we have an alibi, so long as we blame our circumstances, we will continue to rot down in our self-pity. But when we dare to begin where we are, to act according to the command of Christ, then the very might of God is put at our disposal and even we, in spite of all our failures, are able to do the grandly impossible. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Will you claim your birthright, the whole of it? Then, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."
"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled to put me into the pool." John 5:7

Here is a man who has obviously made a mess of his life. He was a failure yesterday, he is a failure today, he counts on being a failure tomorrow. All through the years he has been a parasite. He has made a habit of taking without giving. Now he has a chance to be different but he seems bent on refusing it. But he wants it understood that his pathetic is only his misfortune. "The fact that I am what I am and where I am", he declares, "is no fault of mine." This man is being wrecked by one of the most decent and deadly devils — that of moral evasiveness.

Look at his story. The scene is in the city of Jerusalem. It is a Sabbath day. The streets are thronged by pious worshipers all on their way to the Temple. But Jesus does not follow the crowd. Instead He goes to that dumping ground of shattered human earthenware that throng the porch overlooking a pool by the sheep gate. This pool is made by a spring that bubbles at intervals. The superstitious crowd explained this bubbling by saying that an angel troubled the water. Of course, it was merely a mineral spring. The one who won his way to the pool after it bubbled was said to be cured.

Now the real value of this water is highly questionable. But the fact that many believed in its efficacy caused some to be cured by it. Is it that one-half of our diseases are born of mental troubles to begin with, therefore, any object in which we have faith is a real cure for imaginary disease; just as it is an imaginary cure for a real disease. The fact that so many believed in the healing powers of this
spring caused the porch overlooking it to be thronged with the blind, the lame, the
and the misfits of the whole city. He took hardened case instead of easiest as I cited on page

Now it was to this crowd of broken and battered souls that Jesus came. Not only so but he fixed his attention on a man who was perhaps the oldest on the waiting list and the most hopeless. This man had waited for his chance for thirty-eight years. This is a long time out of any man's life. It is doubly long when one is sick. It is longer still when one is sick without friends. During these monotonous years you may be sure that this man had become not only flabby and wasted in body but flabby in will.

It was this man for whom nobody hoped, least of all himself, that Jesus singled out for His ministry of mercy. He began by asking him a question. On the surface the question takes us by surprise as it must have surprised the one to whom it was addressed. It sounds almost silly if not positively cruel. Looking at this bit of human wreckage Jesus said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" That is, "Would you like to get well? Would you like to quit lying on the sideline and have a part in the game?" What did Jesus mean by this question?

1. He meant to face the fact with prostrate man that he was not whole. This question has in it the sound of psychology. In order to do anything for this man Jesus must have confidence. Had He begun by doubting that anything was wrong with the patient would have had no confidence in his prospective physician. Jesus is simply getting into his confidence by saying, "There is something wrong with you. You know it and I know it. You are not living as abundantly as you might live." Such a question as this our Lord might put to you and to me. In fact He does put that question constantly, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He is not arguing the question of being utterly bad, completely dead morally. But Robinson used to offer at the close of his service to pray for any who had a shortage in their religious experience. Almost every congregation could respond unanimously to that invitation. Most of us are short on life. We are short in spiritual wholeness.

2. Not only is Jesus facing the fact in this question that the man is not
whole. He is implying that wholeness is possible even for him. If the man's case

If I were to say to you in all seriousness, "Would you like to jump over the moon?", you would accuse me of being either silly or crazy. Jesus is asking a reasonable question. If there is no possibility of curing, this question is not only senseless but cruel.

It is cruel because the mere asking the sick man such a question implies the possibility of cure. It tended to excite expectation and hope. Jesus was too infinitely kind to ever excite hopes that He could not satisfy. Therefore, when He said, "Wilt thou be made whole?", He meant, "You can be whole." He means that for you and me. No man need be a moral and spiritual weakling. No man needs to remain the way he is. Every man can be magnificently different if he wills to be so.

3. Not only is Jesus confessing that this man is not whole and that he may be whole but He is telling him that whether he finds that possible wholeness or not depends upon his own choice. Jesus is virtually saying, "I cannot cure you unless you will to be cured. I cannot force wholeness upon you, but if you want to be cured enough to put yourself wholly in my hands then I will guarantee a cure."

This matter of looking to our Lord for salvation is very much like our trusting a physician when we are suffering from some malady. I know that often times we pay a physician to tell us how to be well when we pay no attention to what he says than we do to what Jesus says. But there are times when our confidence is superb. One time you lay down on an operating table knowing that one false move on the part of your physician would cause you to open your eyes in eternity. Yet so great was your confidence that you did even that. Such a confidence in God would surely guarantee spiritual health.

What reply did this impotent man make to Jesus' question? It is thoroughly disappointing. Without the slightest sparkle in his eye, without the slightest degree of hope he merely whined, "You need not talk to me about getting well. I have been sick for a lifetime and always will be. I want you to know that it is no fault
of mine. I have simply been the most unfortunate and most ill-treated creature that ever lived. I am what I am not because I have ever done wrong but because I lived among such a bunch of sinners." You see he won't get wise to himself. He shut his eyes to the facts about himself.

II

Why is he so evasive?

1. First, he is evasive because he hasn't the grit to tell himself the truth. He had rather lie to himself by placing the blame on others than to feel uncomfortable.

All of us are evasive at times out of sheer fear. Sometimes we are afraid of the blame of our fellows. About the first wicked lie that a child tells is told to save himself from being blamed. We often keep up that lying all through life.

Why, when we do wrong, do we so often excuse ourselves? Eve began it. Having been caught in an act of disobedience, instead of confessing that she disobeyed of her own choice, she said, "It is not my fault, it is the fault of the serpent."

Thereby she sought to avoid the blame of God but above all else, she sought to avoid the pain of blaming herself. To tell yourself that you did wrong because you were at once wicked and cowardly is to feel quite uncomfortable.

So much is this the case that some will never do it. I am thinking now of a man to whom God gave almost everything. Yet he threw it away in large measure, brought shame to himself and upon his family. There is no measuring the suffering that he caused. I knew him well. I talked to him often, but never once did I know him to blame himself. Everybody had done wrong except him alone. He simply had not the courage to face the facts about himself.

I am thinking now of a man who began as an idealist but today he is outside the church. He is making no contribution whatsoever. Whose fault is it? Not his. The church is so dead wrong that he cannot afford to be a part of it. When the twelve spies went to spy out the land of Canaan, they realized that a land so well defended could not be taken without battle. Therefore ten of them brought back a report that the land was worthless. It was merely sour grapes. Why did they do this?
They had either to lie about the land or to lie about themselves. Refusing to tell themselves that they lacked the gallantry and grit necessary to take possession of the land, they made themselves comfortable by saying, "It is not my fault."

2. The second reason why this impotent man excused himself was because he was sorry for himself. He was a victim of self-pity. Of course, you say that a man who has been flat of his back for half a lifetime might be excused from pitying himself. But it was not his pitiful plight that had caused him to pity himself. It was rather the other way round. His self-pity had helped to wreck him. Of all the foes that tear personality to bits, few if any are worse than self-pity.

It is well to remember too that if you begin pitying yourself, that is not because of circumstances. Self-pity is an inside job. If you pity yourself in one situation you are likely to pity yourself in every situation. Because this is the case, one man often finds stark tragedy in a situation where another finds abiding triumph.

Centuries ago among the captives carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon there was a young fellow twelve or sixteen years of age by the name of Daniel. Soon after his arrival in Babylon, this boy was selected for education in the royal schools. Arriving at the palace a banquet was spread with meats and drinks that were contrary to his religion. Had he been a self-pitier, he might have written home in this fashion: "My dear Father: I am a captive in a strange land. I cannot antagonize my captors. Therefore I have decided to eat the King's meat and drink the King's wine. Everybody in Babylon does that." Had Daniel done that, he would never have been heard of. But instead he said, "I still have conviction and I still have God". Therefore he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. Some people duck their responsibility out of self-pity.

3. Then it is easy in our day to stand from under because the needs are so great and we individually are so small. We speak of building a new world but what can one man do about it? What can I do to make the San Francisco Conference a success? There is real danger that the gigantic task that we face today will paralyze "I can't do everything."
some of us and because we can't do everything leads us to do nothing. Yet in reality there is no need so great that the least of can't help in some fashion to meet.

4. Along with these because they can't do everything something, there is another group who get so busy trying to do everything in general that they do nothing in particular. Hogarth tells of a man who got so busy years ago worrying about the debt of the British Empire that he went broke and got put in prison for debt. But even while he sat in his cell he kept figuring on how the British Empire could pay its debt. I saw a mother, years ago, so busy saving the children of the whole city in which she lived that she totally neglected her own.

There is an interesting story in the Old Testament of a soldier who was set to guard a very important prison. He was told that his task was so important that if the prisoners were allowed to escape, he himself would be put to death. But in spite of the fact that his task was so specific and important he allowed his prisoner to escape. When he was called in question, he did not claim that the prisoner had overpowered him. He did not plead that a whole regiment had come and taken the prisoner away from him by force. His explanation was this, "While thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." That is, he got so busy shooting into the covey that he failed to wing the single bird.

The man who saved Egypt from starvation years ago was named Joseph. How did he manage this big task? He came into Egypt as a slave. He came to rule Egypt because he began by ruling himself. A man came to me sometime ago saying that he wanted to do something for the Lord. He wanted to get up a lecture on the Prince of Peace and deliver it to my congregation. I asked him what his business was. When he told me he was a travelling man, I asked him if he ever spoke to his fellows about the Prince of Peace. "No," he said, "I want to do something in a big way." Jesus was willing to do something in a little way. He won his disciples one by one. Then some evade their responsibilities because they get so busy saving the whole world that they haven't any time for the duty that lies right at hand.
Now what is wrong with this evasiveness? It shuts the door of any possible improvement in our faces. The Prodigal Son set out for home only when he got wise to himself and said, "Here I am starving in a hogpen, when I might be feasting in my father's house." Germany has gone to pieces. I read of one general, when captured, who burst into tears. There are doubtless many tears in Germany today. But what is unspeakably sad, I have not heard of a single German weeping because of the wrong that has been done, but only because they did not get away with it. Those who say, "It is not my fault" never change.

But for those who are willing to shoulder their own responsibility, for those who are willing to get wise to themselves and act accordingly, then there is boundless hope. So it proved for this man who had been cluttering up the road of progress for half a lifetime. As soon as Jesus succeeded in getting him to face the fact that he was wrong not because he had to be but because he was willing to be, the recovery began.

Look how Jesus brought it about. He gave this man a three-fold command. It is a command that nobody could carry out for him but it was a command that he could carry out for himself. Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

1. First, rise. Stand up, get on your feet. Now I am aware that that was the one thing the impotent man felt he could not do. But God is always attacking us at the point of our impossibility. He constantly calls on us to do what in our own strength we cannot do. But when we will what He wills for us, then the impossible becomes possible. So when this man said, "Getting up is my job", he got up.

2. "Take up thy bed." Why this command? I think Jesus understood the mental processes that were going on in the patient's mind. He was saying to himself, "I am on my feet, it is true, but goodness only knows how long I can stay that way. I am going to leave this mat here so I will have something to come back to." But that is never the way to a permanent cure. I have never known a man yet to quit liquor drinking by keeping a quart near him for medicinal purposes. In order to succeed in
any adventure, we must burn our bridges behind us. When the Spanish set out to conquer South America, the leader had their ships burned in the harbor. That meant there was no going back. Those who succeed in Christian living buy a one way ticket.

3. "Walk." That is another word for work. Jesus is virtually saying to this man, "You have been carried long enough. You have been taking without giving. Now is your chance to make your contribution." Jesus was wise enough to know that if this man went to work for others he would have the best possible chance of staying on his feet. How many who begin the Christian life full of promise fail at it because they give themselves no definite task. To undertake to live a wholesome life without sharing the burdens of others is to fail ourselves and to help others to fail.

In almost every city in America today there is an organization called Alcoholics Anonymous. This organization is rendering a real service to men and women who have become a bondservant to drink. It works on a basis that is at once sound Christianity and sound psychology. When an alcoholic gives up his habit he seeks at once some friend who is suffering from the same tragic bondage from which he has been released. He induces this friend to quit. He makes this friend his personal responsibility. In order to be of help to his friend, he himself of necessity must stay sober. This gives him the strongest reason for continuing to live his emancipated life. That is almost the way of victory in Christian living. The best way to enjoy a strong spiritual life is to take the burden of human need upon yourself. It is only those who say with old remade Scrooge, "Humanity is my job", who really succeeds in wholly Christian living.
The heroine of this story was not regarded as in any sense heroic by those who made her their victim. She did not come to Jesus at first of her own accord. She was rather dragged into His presence by a group of ruthless and brutal men. She came no doubt in shame and bitterness. She was eager to be anywhere else except where she was. But though the presence of Jesus was at first enforced upon her, she came to accept that presence as her deepest joy. And what her enemies had intended to bring her nothing but harm ended, through the mercy of Christ, in bringing her the highest possible good.

The scene presented by this story is a hellish scene. One more ugly and cruel at least in its beginnings could hardly be found in all the Bible. "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Jesus a woman taken in adultery." These men were the religious leaders of the day. They were men no doubt decent and respectable in their personal lives. They were the pillars of the Church and state. But here we find them doing a shameful and cruel something. They were dragging a woman into the presence of Jesus.

Who this woman is we do not know. She is left nameless. Possibly she became known in the Church of that day, and her identity is kept secret here to spare her any possible shame for her guilty past. All we know about her is that she had been taken in a shameful act. She may have been young and foolish. She may have been the shattered fragment of a broken home. She may have been brought up in a home of religion and refinement and have lost her decency because she loved not wisely but too well.
Maybe by now, she had grown old in the ways of sin, calloused
and hard, with all her tenderness burned up by too many days and
nights of debauchery.

Why do these Scribes and Pharisees drag this woman into the
presence of Jesus? They pretend that they are concerned in finding
out the mind of Jesus. They are interested, they would have us
believe, in doing away with this shameful sin, and making their
city a more wholesome place in which to live. But, that is not
their real reason. Hatred of vice is no more their reason for this
shameful escapade than is the spreading of filth over their pages
the motive of many of our modern fiction writers.

No more are these earnestly religious men flinging
this helpless thing down in the presence of Jesus because they
are interested in her. They are not seeking her salvation. They
do not believe in it, nor care for it. They are as indifferent
to her as if she were a dead dog. She is no more to them than
exhibit A.

Why, then, this shameful spectacle? These Scribes
and Pharisees are seeking to embarrass Jesus. No doubt they had
talked the matter over and had deliberately planned it. "We will
bring", they said among themselves, "an outcast woman into His
presence and ask Him what to do with her." So, they said,
"The law of Moses commands us that such should be stoned, but
what sayeth Thou? Shall we stone her, or shall we not stone her?"

They expect Jesus to be greatly embarrassed by this
question. And whether He answers in the negative or the affirmative
they feel that He will be compromised. Suppose He forbids their
stoning her, then they will accuse Him of being a modernist in
contradicting Moses. For, Moses had plainly said that such
should be stoned. Suppose He agrees with Moses, then He runs into Roman law. For since they have become the subjects of Rome, they are not allowed to execute the death sentence.

Having put their question, they become convinced at once that they have succeeded beyond their expectations. Jesus is naturally greatly embarrassed. So much so, that He will not even lift His eyes and look either at them or at the woman. He rather stoops down and writes on the ground. But while He is genuinely embarrassed, they are greatly mistaken as to the cause of His embarrassment. They fancy that He is embarrassed because He does not know how to answer them. But that is not the real cause of His embarrassment at all. Why was Jesus so shamed by this scene?

First of all, He was shamed beyond words by the callous cruelty of these religious leaders. He speaks of being ashamed at the day of Judgment of certain souls. He will be ashamed then because He is ashamed now. It is horrible to cause shame to a noble and tender heart that loves you. I should have hated to bring shame to my father and mother. I should hate to bring shame to my wife and children, to have them to blush because of their relationship to me. But how awful it is to have Jesus blush for us! And He could not hold up His head in the presence of these Scribes and Pharisees who were doing such a devilish thing in the name of God.

Then, I think Jesus wrote on the ground because of his fine delicacy. He saw that this woman was suffering. He saw that whatever her past life had been that she was now in an agony of embarrassment. He feared to make it worse by looking at her. And because He was ashamed of her tormenters, and because He did not wish to increase the agony of her shame, He stooped down and wrote on the ground as if He did not hear the question that His enemies were
putting to Him.

But, the silence of Jesus only increased the confidence of His questioners. They began to press Him for an answer. I can hear them as they gather about Him with glowing cheeks and flaming eyes. "Come on," they say, "shall we stone her, or, not stone her?" Possibly they reach down and pick up stones that are lying at their feet as if readiness to do His bidding as soon as He gives His answer.

Thus, urged, Jesus straightens up and proceeds to give His answer. And what an answer it was! How fraught with common-sense! It contains the very wisdom of God. What did He say—stone her, or not stone her? He said neither. This is His answer: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." He knew that if the first stone was cast by a sinless man, this woman would never be stoned.

Now, this Word of Jesus fitted the occasion. It was a most timely Word; it is also timeless. We do not throw stones with our hands today as the Jews used to do; we throw them with our tongues. The stones we throw are criticism and harsh judgments. And Jesus says of such: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her." If you are a sinner, so is she. She has the same right to stone you that you do to stone her. Therefore, both sides had better let stoning alone.

Sometimes this text is made to read: "Let him that is without that same sin cast a stone at her." But this puts the text within too narrow limits. There were possibly those present who were not guilty of the sin of adultery, but they were guilty of other sins that were equally deadly. They were no doubt
guilty of a worse sin - the sin of being loveless and cruel. This woman was guilty of the sin of the flesh; they were guilty of the sins of disposition, and they are more damaging and damming in the sight of Jesus even than the sins of the flesh. This principle, then, that Jesus laid down forbids stone-throwing on the part of any of us because we have all sinned. And a parable has grown out of it: "They that live in glass houses should not throw stones."

III

What was the effect of this answer?

1. For the Scribes and Pharisees did wonder, then, being surprised. They would have hardly been more surprised had they seen this fallen woman growing angel wings. Not only were they surprised, but they were brought to a conviction. Hard as they were, they still had some conscience, and as that question of Jesus probed into that conscience, it struck a sensitive spot. Their faces fell. They could not look up and meet His eye.

So overwhelming was their conviction, that they began to slip out of that presence one by one. By and by, not one of them is left. Possibly they met again down the street, and one said to the other: "Why didn't you stone her?" "I couldn't," he answered quietly. Somehow the thought of my own sin fairly withered the sinews of my arms and made me as weak as water. I should not wonder if that wise answer did not follow them till it broke their hearts, and brought them at last into personal surrender to Jesus Christ.

2. But, what is the effect on the woman? I think that she, if possible, was more surprised than her tormenters had been. She had never dreamed of an answer like that.
She, too, was convicted with a conviction that she thought could never come to her again. She was convinced that this man knew her as none other ever had, that He knew of all her yesterdays with their black and bitter stains. But she was convinced, also, that in spite of His knowledge of her guilty past and guilty present, He loved her still.

Therefore, when her persecutors slunk out one by one, she did not go. Why did she remain where she was with a spotlight of an unwelcome publicity placed upon her? Jesus was not looking at her; He was writing on the ground again. Her tormenters were not looking at her. Now, she had a perfect chance to escape unseen and slip back into her old life. But she did not take the chance. She did not because she was held to the spot, caught under the spell of Jesus.

Now, with the crowd gone, Jesus straightens up again and looks at her. There she stood alone. And Jesus looked at her with the tenderness of the love of God in His eyes, and said:"Woman, where are these, thy accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" And I can imagine it is with a voice choked with sobs that she answers that question:"No man, Lord." Then Jesus answered,"Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." And to put it positively:"I forgive thee. Go and continue no more in sin."

IV

What is involved in this forgiveness of Jesus:

1. It is far more than the remission of a penalty. Jesus was sinless, and He could have stoned her, and not have violated His own Word. But forgiveness means far more than
escape from punishment. When one is really convicted of sin, escape is not their uppermost desire at all. In fact, forgiveness does not always mean an escape from consequences. There are some consequences that we suffer for certain sins—
even though we are forgiven.

2. Jesus' forgiveness meant that He had forgotten her past. That is His promise to every repentant sinner:
"I will forgive your iniquities and your sins, and I will remember no more." And because He forgets, He gives you and me the right to forget. Having confessed your sin, and repented of it, you have no right to keep tormenting yourself with it - you are to turn your back upon it.

3. The forgiveness of Jesus means a restored relationship. The prodigal who has disinherited himself is back in his father's house, and is an accepted son once more. Sin breaks off our relationship with Christ. Forgiveness restores it. He takes us back into His fellowship and treats us as if we had never sinned.

4. The forgiveness of Jesus means new power. It means the restoration of spiritual health. There is no measuring the strength for right and joyful living that grows out of the consciousness of forgiveness. Jesus believed that this poor fallen creature could find victory. Her feet that had walked the path that takes hold on hell could now walk the path that leads to the lily land of purity.
"Go and sin no more." That means, go and find victory, where you have once gone down in defeat.
There is no one, I dare say, for whom a victorious life is more difficult than for a woman of this kind. Yet, many who have gone to the lowest depth have been amazingly redeemed by a forgiving love of Christ. Sam Hadley said that one night on his way home, he was accosted by a woman of the street. "Go home with me," she said. "No, you go home with me," he answered. "I don't care if I do," she replied. And they walked down the street together till they came to Sam Hadley's home. And he ushered her in and introduced her to his wife. She was amazed and confused. She sat a little while in embarrassed silence, and then said she must go. And Mrs. Hadley got her wrap. And as she put it around her, she threw her arms around her, and kissed her. And the woman never left. For sixteen years she was one of the most victorious and consecrated workers that Water Street Mission ever had. She had come, as we must come, as a needy sinner. Christ waits to say to you and me just what He said to this needy woman long ago: "Go and sin no more. Will you take Him at His Word?"
THE SOILED FACE

"They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act."
—John 8:4

Scholars are at a loss as to where to place this story. With the critical questions involved it is not my purpose to deal. But the story itself brings its own credentials. Its truthfulness is indicated by the fact that what it has to say about the scribes and Pharisees is in perfect consistency with what we know about them. The story is also consistent with what we know of the mind of Christ. He acts here just as we should have expected Him to act. Though we have not met the woman before, we feel that her reactions are just what we should have expected. I believe, therefore, that this story is not only true but factual. I think we are here dealing with a drama that actually took place.

I

All actors in this drama, with the exception of Jesus, have soiled faces. The verdict of every one of them with regard to himself is "Guilty!"

1. This is true of the woman. She may have been a hard and shameless creature, but she is not so shameless as to deny her guilt. She knows that such a denial would be useless. There are credible witnesses present to prove she is guilty. The evidence they have to give is not hearsay evidence, but that of eye-witnesses. Of course, the degree of her guilt is not known either by them or by us. She may have been a problem child. She may have taken early to the primrose path in spite of the prayers and tears of those who loved her. She may have come to this scene brazen of face, tarnished of body,
On the other hand, she may never have had a chance. She may have been a part of the fragments of a broken home. Or she may have "loved not wisely but too well." She may have given her heart to a scoundrel who had betrayed her and had then thrown her away like a dried orange peel. The society of her day did not ask about the circumstances—they simply pronounced her guilty. Being guilty, she had no place in the scheme of things. The situation is largely the same in our time. In her day and in every day, the sinner of her type has been the most hopeless and despised of mankind.

"She was a woman worn and thin,
Whom the world condemned for a single sin,
And cast her out by the king's highway
And passed her by as they went to pray.

"He was a man and more to blame,
But the world spared him a breath of shame.
Beneath his feet he saw her lie,
But he raised his head and passed her by."

How guilty this woman is we cannot say, but the fact of her guilt none can deny.

2. But if this tarnished creature is guilty, so are her accusers. The record of their guilt is plainly written in their conduct. We know them, at least in part, by what they do. They show themselves at once hypocritical and heartless. In dragging this unfortunate creature into the presence of Jesus they claim to be asking light on a difficult question. What are they as religious leaders to do with this creature who is an abiding problem? Such a question would have been altogether legitimate if they had been honest in asking it. But this is not the case at all. With no thought of the pain that they are
inflicting on the woman, they are simply seeking to embarrass the Master. They are putting to Him one of those yes and no questions of which they are so fond. "Master," they say, "here is a woman who was taken in the very act of shame. Moses said that we should stone such, but what do you say?" If Jesus answers, "Yes, stone her," He runs into conflict with Rome, for Roman law does not allow them to inflict the death penalty. If he answers, "Do not stone her," He runs into conflict with the law of Moses, and lays Himself open to the charge of being a heretic.

In thus seeking to embarrass the Master, they succeed beyond their expectations. Jesus is so embarrassed that He cannot look either at them or at their victim. Instead He stoops and with His finger writes on the ground. But though embarrassed, His embarrassment is not for the reason that His enemies suspect. He is not embarrassed because He does not know how to answer. He is rather desperately ashamed of these religious leaders who have icicles for hearts. He is also ashamed for this tarnished woman whose pain and shame He cannot but share.

The scribes and Pharisees, seeing the Master's embarrassment, and thinking that they have succeeded even beyond their hopes, press Him for an answer. "Tell us," they urge, "shall we stone her or not stone her?" Then Jesus straightens up and looks at them. There must have been something in His face that they could never forget. "All right," He answers calmly, "stone her by all means. That is, if you are sinless! Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone at her." How sane, and how magnificent! It seems that anybody ought to have thought of that. What could be more absurd than for one sinner to stone another sinner? The word is so shot through with commonsense that it has been made into a proverb—"They that live in glass houses should not throw stones."

Naturally this word is just as timely today as it was nineteen centuries
ago. You and I need it, even as did the scribes and Pharisees. This is the case because we, too, are pretty skilful at throwing stones. Of course, we are a bit more refined in our methods. We do not use our hands as a rule. That would be a bit too crude and vulgar. Instead we use our tongues. We use a shrug of the shoulder. We use a lift of the eyebrow, a knowing look, a breaking off of diplomatic relations. But it still holds true that only the guiltless have a right to stone the guilty. That should make stone-throwing forever an impossibility for every one of us.

That is the conviction even of these scribes and Pharisees. It is evident from the story that they are not very sensitive. They are full of pride over their own decency. They are harsh and cruel and hard as nails. But this sharp shaft of Jesus pierces even their tough armor. This sane word paralyzes even their stout arms. They cannot look Jesus in the face. They cannot even look each other in the face. One by one they turn away. Beginning with the oldest, who is perhaps the most wise and sensible, down to the youngest, they troop out. As they go, they utter by their every step this verdict with regard to themselves, "We, the jury, find the defendant, who is ourselves, guilty as charged."

But in affirming the guilt of these accusers, we are not saying that they are guilty of the same sin as this outcast woman. I am quite sure that such is not the case. I have no doubt that among these there are men who have lived through the years loyal to their marriage vows. But there are other sins besides the sins of the flesh. There are, for instance, sins of disposition that make us as hard and cold and loveless as are these religious leaders. There are also those sins of neglect that enable us to slip through a troubled world without feeling its anguish, and without any serious effort to minister to its needs.

It was against these latter forms of sin that Jesus uttered His sharpest rebukes. The Prodigal who left His father's house and went into the far country
was guilty of the sins of passion, the sins of the flesh. Nobody knew this better
than his decent and respectable brother. He declared that this prodigal had
devoured with harlots the substance that his father had put into his hands.
But when the fatted calf was killed and the feast was made, it was the penitent
Prodigal that gained admission. His brother, in spite of his thrift and hard
work was shut out. Nor is their situation unique. That is what is happening
in every generation. This is what Jesus meant when He said to the self-righteous
of His day, "The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom before you." Before
the humble and penitent the door to the Kingdom opens of its own accord. But
to the proud and self-sufficient not even God can open it.

Not only are these accusers wrong in their dispositions, but they are wrong
in their conduct. They accept no share in the guilt of this woman. Yet she has
doubtless become what she is in part through their failure. They have no thought
of saving her. She is none of their business. They are under no obligations to
help for what seem to them two good reasons. They are not called upon to help
because she is too low to be worthy of their effort. Not only so, but she is
beyond hope. Hampered by these convictions, they naturally do nothing. Thus,
they put themselves among those that Jesus rebukes unsparingly. It is signifi-
cant that the Master directs all His parables of judgment, not against out-
breaking sinners, but against those who face human need and make no positive
effort to help. The man who hid his talent in the earth, the priest and the
Levite who left a brother to die by the wayside, the man who passes up the naked
and the hungry and refuses to minister, these are the ones who miss life in the
here and now, and who are going to miss it forever. These respectable sinners
are therefore guilty, even as this woman is guilty.

II

What does Jesus do with this soiled creature that is flung at His feet?
By his own test He has the right to stone her. "Let him that is without sin first cast a stone at her," is His word. He Himself is sinless; therefore, the right is His. But He does not claim it. Instead of stoning her, He befriends her. In fact, He does for her what He is constantly doing for all sinners—He forgives her. The only difference between the sinners and the saints is that the saints accept His offered forgiveness while the sinners refuse to accept it. But the offer is made freely and constantly to all.

Such treatment of sinners on the part of Jesus was at once a source of amazement and horror to the religious leaders of His day. It helped to lead them to declare with indignation that He was a friend of publicans and sinners. Again they criticized, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." Jesus never denied the charge. He accepted it as the truth and justified it on the grounds that it was not the whole who needed a physician but the sick. He declared further that He was come to seek and to save that which was lost. He even dared to claim that in treating sinners in this fashion He was doing what God does, is doing constantly. He was sure that God is persistently seeking to put the lost coin back into circulation, to bring the lost sheep back to the fold, to restore the lost son to the peace and plenty of his father's home.

Our Lord's method of bringing about this high end is never by stoning, but always, I repeat, by forgiving. One day, for instance, four devoted men put a friend of theirs on a stretcher to take him to Jesus. Arrived at the house where the Master is preaching, they find it jammed to the doors. There seems no possible way of accomplishing their purpose. But they are devoted and determined. Therefore, they climb to the roof, remove the tile, take their sashes and tie them to each corner of the stretcher, then they lower their friend till he lies at the feet of Jesus. This done, they lie prone upon their faces and see what the Master will do. Then, as so often happened, He does the unexpected thing.
He looks beyond the useless limbs of this sufferer to the tragedy that has made him what he is. He puts his finger not on the symptom, but on the disease. This man is a helpless wreck because of his own wrong-doing. Therefore, Jesus treats the cause by saying, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." That is our Lord's way of dealing with sin, yesterday and today and tomorrow.

III

What does forgiveness mean?

1. What does it mean for our Lord to forgive? It means something that is very costly. I am aware that a surface reading of this story might convey the opposite impression. It sounds as if forgiveness were very cheap and easy. When Jesus straightens up a second time, the scribes and the Pharisees have gone. The woman alone is left. Why, I wonder, did she not go? It would have been so easy for her to have slipped away, and to have thus saved herself further embarrassment. Why does she choose to stay? She does so because she has a growing conviction that she is face to face with a Friend. The wintery atmosphere in which she has just been shivering now has in it some of the genial warmth of spring. Then this Friend asks a question, "Where are thy accusers, hath no man condemned thee?" When she answers, "No man, Lord," this is His thrilling reply, "Neither do I condemn thee, go thy way and sin no more."

What does such a word mean? Does it mean that Jesus condones sin, that He is virtually telling this fallen creature that her evil past does not matter? By no means. The woman herself would have known such a word for a hastily lie. Jesus knows sin for the deadly thing that it is. He hates it for what it has done to this woman. He hates it for what it has caused her to do to others that are infinitely dear to His heart. Suppose a mother had been present whose son in the freshness of his youth had been wrecked by this creature, would that mother have found it easy to have forgiven her? Bear in mind that Jesus loved those whose lives she had helped to tarnish with a love infinitely more tender
than that of any mother. Because of Jesus' hatred of sin and because of His love
for man, it was not easy for Him to forgive. In fact, it cost Him so much to for-
give that it can only be measured in terms of the Cross.

2. What does forgiveness mean for this woman? When Jesus says, "Go and sin
no more," what is her thought as she slips from His presence out into that ugly
world where she has so tragically failed? Do you suppose she at once finds a
fallen friend and tells her gleefully, "I came very nearly getting stoned to death
awhile ago! In fact, but for the help of a certain Rabbi, I might not be here now.
But thanks to His forgiveness I escaped the consequences of my sin." No, I am sure
she does not say that. She cannot think of the rich boon that has come to her as
a mere escape. The truth is she has not fully escaped. Even granting that for-
giveness has saved her from being stoned, it has not saved her from all the con-
sequences of her sin. Forgiveness seldom does that for any of us. We meet proof
of this fact again and again.

Some years ago I had a friend who was converted after he was past sixty years
of age. Up to that date he had led a rather hard life. But when he did come to
Christ, he came with all his heart. He became a most earnest Christian. But
there was one something that his conversion could not do. He had raised a large
family. Every one of them was now grown. But though he was most eager to win
them for Christ, they had passed beyond the call of his voice and the reach of
his hand. I have seen him stand up in his little village church and sob in
brokenness of heart over his failure. God's forgiveness had saved him from his
sin, but not from the consequences of sin.

I was called to see a woman sometime ago who was dying of poison, self-
administered. She told me something of her pitiful story, of how she had suffered
in body and mind till she seemed unable to carry on any longer. "My past was a
failure," she sobbed, "my present bitter, my future without hope. Therefore, I
gave up. I am sorry now. But tell me this, will God forgive me? Can He for-
give me?" With deep assurance I could tell her that forgiveness was here for the
taking—in fact, that God was far more willing to forgive than she was to be forgiven. I have reason to believe that she accepted His pardon and slipped away in peace. But there was one thing that forgiveness did not do—it did not take the deadly poison out of her veins. Forgiveness does not always bring salvation from the consequences of our sin.

What then, I repeat, does forgiveness mean for this woman? Listen again to what our Lord has to say to her: "Go thy way and sin no more." What is He saying? Take the first word—"Go thy way." That is, "Turn your back on your evil past. Forget the things that are behind. Leave your stained yesterday to me." Then He continues, "Sin no more. Though you have walked to this hour through the stenchful muck of a moral quagmire, you will walk through the lily-lands of purity tomorrow because you have met Me and have trusted Me, and I have trusted you." Thus, forgiveness has enabled her to break with the past. It has set before her an open door through which she may pass undergirded by a new friendship. By being forgiven, she has become reconciled to God. Thus has all life for her become new.

What then are we to do with our sins? We are to do what Jesus told this soiled woman to do—we are to turn our backs upon them. We are to forget them even as God forgets. That is what Paul urges when he says, "Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth unto those that are before, let us press toward the mark of the prize." When the friends of Jesus had failed Him in Gethsemane, He did not throw them away. He said, "Rise up, let us be going." He walks with those who have failed. But even failures who walk in that fellowship receive new powers to resist the wrong and to choose the right. So it may be with you and me. Living with Him as our Friend, we increasingly become able to say, "Old things are passed away, behold they are become new." Therefore, I dare to say to myself and to all my fellow-sinners what Jesus said to this woman of that far-off yesterday. "Go thy way and sin no more."
WHAT ABOUT THE UNDER-DOG

Moses said that such a creature should be stoned, but what do you say?

John 8:5 Moffett

Scholars are at a loss to know just where to place this story. With the critical questions involved, however we are not concerned. Whatever is the place I have no doubt of its truthfulness. It bears the imprint of truth upon its every detail. The Scribes and the Pharasees are perfectly consistent. The same is true of Jesus. While we should never have thought of dealing with this situation in the beautifully unique fashion in which he dealt with it, yet when we read what he said and did we feel that it was just like him. We are certain that this is just the way that he would have acted under such circumstances. I am convinced, therefore, that we are here dealing with something that actually took place.

I.

Look at the story. It is highly arresting and dramatic. There is that which is surpassingly ugly, and also amazingly beautiful. It is at once sordid and sublime. It pictures cruelty that is perfectly hellish in its heartlessness. It also pictures a tenderness that is the very tenderness of God. Here we come face to face with a sordidness that makes us shudder. Here we find also a winsome delicacy that is appealing and fascinating beyond all words.

Certain Scribes and Pharasees drag an outcast woman into the presence of
Jesus and fling her down at his feet. These men represent the religious leaders of the day. They are, in the main, decent and respectable men who stand high in the community. But here they do not show up well. As they cast this soiled and tarnished creature at the feet of Jesus they remind him that Moses commanded that such outcasts should be stoned. But what they asked “do you say?” Do you agree with Moses or do you not? Shall we stone her, or shall we not stone her? This is one of those yes and no questions such as lawyers like to ask. It sounds very frank and straight-forward. It did seem as if they were earnestly eager to know the mind of the Master. But such is not in reality the case.

Why, then do they ask this question? They are not asking it because they know what Jesus thinks. They are not asking in order to learn how to build a more wholesome city, to create a cleaner environment that will give their fellows a better chance to live clean lives. They are not asking the question because they are deeply concerned about this woman. They are not concerned about her in the least. To them, she is hardly a human being. She means little more than a street dog. She is merely a means to an end, and that end, the embarrassment of Jesus. They forget that she is a personality, that is capable of suffering shame. As base men have made her, a means to the satisfying of their lust in other days, so they make her a means toward the embarrassment of one whom they seek to discredit.

Who was this woman? We do not know. She is left nameless. Her are we told how she lost her purity and became an outcast. Possibly, she was a lovely young creature more sinned against than sinning. Possibly, she was one who had loved wisely, but too well. She might have grown up in the home of some proud parents, who cast her aside at her first downward step. Perchance she was far in the ways of sin. Maybe she was beautiful, but now sordid and ugly, having been fingered by too many soiled hands. It is impossible to assess the degree of her guilt since we do not know her background or the fierceness of the temptations that wrought her ruin.
But with such questions these human jackals are in no sense concerned. All that is of interest to them, I repeat, is the embarrassment of Jesus. So they pressed the question "Shall we stone her, or shall we not?" Suppose he said "Yes, stone her by all means." Then he runs into the Roman law. For the Jews have no right to exact the death penalty. Suppose he says "No, do not stone her. Then he contradicts Moses. He is then discredited because he is not orthodox. He becomes nothing more than a modernist, not only so but he is even more discredited by making himself the champion of the soul in modern times.

In thinking that they could thus embarrass Jesus they were not greatly mistaken. He becomes greatly embarrassed. So much so that he cannot look up. He stoops down and with his finger writes on the ground. But his embarrassment is not due to the fact that he finds it impossible to answer the question. He is rather embarrassed because of his question. It fills Him with bitter and burning shame. That men in place of leadership should be so utterly heartless and cruel. Then he is shamed by the pathetic plight of the woman. With a fine delicacy he refuses to add to her embarrassment. To spare her, he will not look at her. Therefore, with the tender thoughtfulness of a perfect Gentleman, he stoops and writes on the ground.

Seeing Him thus embarrassed, His questionists take fresh courage. They press the more insistently for an answer. Then Jesus straightening up, saw them with the answer. It was an answer that made them fairly gasp in amazement. It also gave them a sense of shame that they themselves would have thought impossible. "Shall we stone her, or shall we not?" "Stone her by all means," answered Jesus provided yourselves have never sinned. Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her." How reasonable! Of course, there is no use for one sinner to destroy another, we should only exterminate each other.

What was the effect of this answer? These cruel men slipped away one by one like whipped curs. I can imagine they met again down the street to talk the situ-
"What About The Under-Dog?"

What About The Under-Dog?" "Why didn't you say something?" The younger said to the other. "Because there was nothing to say," came the answer. "Why didn't you stone her?" another questioned. "Why didn't you?" was the reply. "As for me," said the more honest one, "Such a condition pleased my arm." It ought to do that for all of us. We do not all stone in the same fashion. Most of our stoning today is done with our tongues. But only the perfect have a right to talk about the imperfect. If we live according to that law, all stone throwing will end forever.

II.

What is the meaning of this question that these men put to Jesus? Stated in everyday language, it is this: "What are we to do with those who make a mess of life?" What are we to do with the under-dog? The men who fail morally and spiritually? How shall we treat those who manage to waste their substance with riotous living? What shall we do with those that make themselves liabilities rather than assets? This was a pressing question in a far-off day. It is just as pressing in our day. What is to be our attitude to the coin that gets out of circulation? To the sheep that is silly enough to go astray. To the son who spurns his father and wanders into the far country?

This question is a pressing and vital question because all of us know such people. Some of them are our friends. I went a few years ago to hold a funeral in a certain city where lived an old school mate for whom I had the highest regard. He had become a distinguished lawyer, but when I sought to telephone him I could not find his name. I had hardly reached home before I had a letter from his wife saying that he was in jail. Yet, he had been my friend, and the superintendent of my Sunday School. Sometimes those whom we know and love and trust as friends disappoint us and go to pieces morally. What is to be our attitude to such people?
Some of these are closer than friends. They are our own loved ones. Sometimes it is a boy whose one contribution to his parents is heartache. Sometimes it is a daughter whose downfall hangs crepe upon the doorway of the heart.

While I was pastor down in Texas a lovely girl who was a member of my church brought shame upon those who loved her. Her mother hardened heart against her and vowed she would never speak to her again, and shut at once her heart and her home in her daughter's face. Was she right or wrong? What is to be our attitude toward the morally and spiritually bankrupt? We know the answer of Moses. Here was a woman who from an asset had become a liability. She had become a menace to the society of her day. She had become a bit of gangrene on the body of society. What was to be done about it? There was only one remedy according to Moses. She must be stoned. She must be destroyed.

I had a friend sometime ago who had a small wound on his hand that resulted in blood-poison. What was the remedy? The physician could not make him a new hand. The very best he could do was to amputate the afflicted member. It was better than nothing, but it was purely negative.

This was a remedy suggested by the Scribes and Pharasees. This woman was to be destroyed. She was to be cast aside upon the cinder pile of burnt out and wasted things. This has been a favorite method with the moral and spiritual misfits through the years. Of course, we recognize the fact that there are certain types of criminals with whom it is necessary to use force. Society must be faced, but any method of dealing with the lawless that only serves to destroy them or to make them more lawless is a failure. We have our reformatories, but they seldom reform anybody. More often, they become high-schools of crime from which the inmates graduate to prey upon society.

What is the method of Jesus? He does not destroy, he seeks rather to con-
shattered and broken human earthenware and make it into a vessel of beauty and
honor. He finds a young runaway slave who is unprofitable and makes him into
a new creation who helps where he once hindered. He will not destroy this
shamed and soiled woman. He will rather make her into a new creation.

III.

How does he do it?

He does not do so by throwing stones at her. He does not seek to accom-
plish his task by saying harsh and unkind things to her. We seldom make anybody
any better that way. "Brethren if a man be overtaken by a fall, ye who are
spiritual restore such a one in weakness. Consider thyself was also tempted."
Who are the folks that help us themselves? Those that are forever criticizing
us, who can never find a good thing to say about us? Or is it the folks who in
spite of our faults find something to compliment and appreciate? Millions of
lives have been made over by appreciation, but very few have been re-made by
bitter rebukes.

How then did Jesus re-make this woman? He began by forgiving her. This
does not mean that he looked upon her sins as small matter. No man ever hated
sin as Jesus hated it. No man ever realized its ugliness so fully as He. The
fact that he forgives does not mean that he condones, but in spite of his hatred
of the woman's sin, he loved her. He loved her so beautifully and so well that
he freely forgave her and opened the door to a new life for her.

Look at the picture when those who had dragged her into his presence had
gone away. The woman herself had a chance to leave, but she did not go. But a
few moments ago she would have given half her life to be anywhere else, but now
she lingers in the presence of this strange man of whom she was once afraid.
With her enemies gone, Jesus now looks at her, but his face is all tenderness.
"Where" he said are these that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? And there is a sob in her throat, I think, as she answers. "No man Lord." Then he said this amazing word "Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more." That is, go thy way, and you will sin no more. From this moment you will head toward the lilly land of purity though you have walked to this hour as through the fetted filth of a moral swamp, you will be clean tomorrow because you have met me, and I have trusted you and you have trusted me.

IV.

We can see from this also what is involved in this forgiveness. What did forgiveness do to this outcast woman?

It saved her from being stoned, is the ready answer. She escaped the penalty of the Mosaic law. But that is merely incidental. As a rule, forgiveness does not mean a forgiveness of a penalty. I saw a woman die a few years ago that had taken poison. Her's was a lingering death. Before the end came she was very sorry. "Will God forgive me?" she asked willfully. "Certainly" I said with conviction. And I am sure he did forgive her, but there was one thing the forgiveness did not do. It did not take the deadly poison out of her body that was destroying her life. You may go out from this hour to waste your substance with riotous living. When you are old and bankrupt you may be saved, but it will not save you of the heartache that comes with a mis-spent life.

Not only does forgiveness often fail to save us from the penalty of our sins but when repentance is genuine, escape from the penalty becomes a matter of secondary importance, or of no importance at all. Jesus, as you know, was crucified between two robbers. One of these robbers was very ordinary. He was a man of narrow vision and small soul. "If thou be the Christ," he said to Jesus, "Save thyself and us." He did not ask to be delivered from his sin. He did not ask to
be forgiven of his sins, he only asked to escape the penalty. But his partner in crime was a great man. A man of massive mind and of big heart. He did not ask for the remission of the penalty. He confessed that his sufferings were just. He only ask that his Lord remember him. He was not seeking a mere escape from punishment, he was seeking escape from the bondage of sin.

What then does forgiveness involve?

1. It involves forgiveness of the past. "Go thy way" said Jesus "And sin no more." Yes, the might have answered desperately "What about yesterday? What about the soiled memories of all my soiled years?" "Turn your back upon them and forget them" said Jesus. We only weaken ourselves by constantly looking back at our own sins. We have a right to forget them because God Himself forgets them. There is only one something in all the universe that God ever forgets. He never forgets a single child of His. He never forgets so much as a cup of cold water that we give in His Name. He never forgets as cheap a creature as a sparrow. But there is one something that he does forget and that is your sin and mine. "I will forget your transgression and your sins will I remember no more."

2. Forgiveness means that our Lord takes us back into his confidence and trusts us just as he did before we went wrong. "Go thy way" said Jesus, "and you will sin no more. I can count on you." "I will forgive you," we sometimes say to one who has wronged us;"but I will not forget you."

By which we mean though I will not wound you as you have me, I will never trust you again. But our Lord trusts us. He even puts the responsibility for the building of His Kingdom upon the shoulders of men and women who have been in rebellion against him.

3. Now since forgiveness means that the relation sin has broken has been restored, since God can now walk with us and we with Him, there comes to us a new courage and a new strength and a new power. In this new fellowship we
ourselves are transformed. We become new creations in Christ Jesus. We shout with Paul "Old things have passed away, Behold they have become new." Forgiveness, therefore means, not the remission of the penalty, but the removal of the stain. It means the renewal of the heart. It means that we who were estranged from God become once more his friends.

Thus our Lord deals with a sinner not by destroying him, but by changing him into a saint. He did so with this most hopeless of cases. Thus he has done again and again. Sam Hadley of Water Street Mission said that he was walking down the streets of New York one night on his way home when he was met by a beautiful woman. She smiled at him and invited him to her home. Knowing her for what she was, he smiled back at her and said, "No, you go home with me." "I don't care if I do." She answered. And they went down the street together.

By and by he came to his home. Opened it with his own latch key, ushered her in and at once introduced her to Mrs. Hadley. Naturally, she was greatly surprised and embarrassed. But both husband and wife were most kind. They induced her to sit down and talk for a bit, but she was restless and soon she prepared to leave. Mrs. Hadley brought her cloak, put it around her, then threw her arms around her neck and kissed her on the lips. After that she couldn't leave. For sixteen years this woman was one of the most effective workers that Water Street ever had. What shall we do with such sinners as ourselves? What shall we do with those about us that go wrong? We shall have to seek to have them re-made by the power of God.
HELL

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go, ye cannot come."  
—John 8:23.

As indicated,

1. My subject is wickedly horrible. The doctrine of hell is so distasteful to the modern mind that vast multitudes have rejected it altogether. This doctrine that was a grim reality to our fathers has become for us little more than a joke. It is a mild swear word. We employ it when we are in a good humor, and laughingly tell our friends to go there. Or we employ it when we are only slightly irritated. When the car is a little slow in starting, when the nail we are driving flies away at our first stroke, we tell these to go there. Of course if we have decided trouble with the car, or if we happen to hurt our finger instead of the nail, we employ more vigorous language.

Hell is unpopular in the pew. It is, if possible, even more unpopular in the pulpit. We say this, not forgetting the fact that the average critic of the church who writes in our magazines (this critic who is usually at least fifty years behind the times, and has all his knowledge from heresay) usually implies that hell is the one abiding theme of the pulpit. But the plain fact is that it is a subject seldom discussed. I dare say there are many habitual church-goers throughout our land who have never heard a sermon on hell in all their lives. We who preach, shy around it, because it is so shocking and so horrible.

But, of course, the matter of importance is not whether belief in hell is shared by the few or the many. It is not whether it is popular or unpopular. The one important question is this: "Is hell a fact or is it not?" If there is nothing in the doctrine
then the sooner we fling away from it the better. But if it so happens that there is a hell, then the man who points out the fact is not our enemy but our friend. There are physicians that are accustomed to warn us of the physical hells that follow upon the violation of nature's laws. But we do not regard them for that reason as cruel fanatics. We look upon them as benefactors. If I tell you that there is a law known as the law of gravitation, with this you must reckon or it will break every bone in your body, I am not for that reason a killjoy. And if it so happens that there is a hell and I warn you of it, I have not for that reason become your enemy.

The truth of the matter is that we never get rid of life's unpleasant facts by simply ignoring them. I read of a certain scientist that was studying in the South Sea Islands. He noticed one of the natives enjoying a feast of figs that he was picking up from the ground. This scientist took one of these figs, broke it open, and looked at it in his microscope. He found it literally alive with numberless little vermin. In his desire to help this native he gave him the microscope and let him see what he was eating. The native was greatly disgusted. He was so disgusted, in fact, that he smashed the microscope upon a nearby rock and went quietly on to eating his figs. And we, too, may fling away from the church and the Book that warns us about hell, but if hell is a fact, it remains a fact, whether we recognize or ignore it.

II.

Now, as strange as it may seem to us, I am convinced that I believe in some kind of hell. And this faith I share, not simply with my fellow ignoramuses of the Bible belt, but I share it with men like Dean Inge and other of the greatest thinkers.
of our day. I believe in hell not because I wish to. I believe in it because I must. There are a number of reasons that simply compel me to the conviction.

1. I believe in hell, because it is the teaching of the Bible. This doctrine does not depend for its support on one or two isolated passages. It is of the very warp and woof of the whole Book. For one who takes the Bible seriously, not only is belief in hell a possibility, but it is readily impossible not to believe in it.

(1) The Bible teaches this horrible doctrine definitely and explicitly. It is far more clearly taught in the Old Testament than in the New. But by far the most startling statements regarding it fall from the lips of Jesus. It was He in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; It was He in whose bosom beat the tenderest heart that this world has ever known, that was most emphatic about the fact of hell. It was He who spoke over and over again of the worm that did not die and of the fire that was never quenched. It was He who said that "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, for it is better to enter life maimed than to remain to have two hands cast into hell." It was He who said, "They shall go away into everlasting punishment." It was He who told of a certain rich man who "lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment."

(2). But, not only does Jesus teach hell explicitly, but He does so with great emphasis in those passages where the word is not mentioned. There has been much discussion through the centuries of the meaning of hell and damnation. There are those who contend that the word "everlasting" as used in the New Testament does not mean "eternal", that the Greeks had no conception of eternity. But we may leave out every word meaning hell, we
may leave out every word meaning damnation or eternal, and we still have an endless hell. This is evidenced from our text, "Ye shall die in your sins," said Jesus, "and whither I go, ye cannot come.

What did Jesus mean by this? He said almost the same thing to Simon Peter, but He added, Ye cannot follow me now, but ye shall hereafter." Why did He not say the same to the other Jews? If they were destined to follow Him later, it would only have been the sober truth of the matter. But He simply said to them, "Where I go, ye cannot come." One day the disciples came asking, "Are there few that be saved?" And Jesus said, "Strive to enter not, for many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able." Why did He not say, "Strive is useless, for at the last long last everybody will enter in." The teaching of Jesus is emphatic wherever He mentions the word. It is even more emphatic where He does not.

(3). But to my mind, Jesus lays the supreme emphasis on the truth of this doctrine in His most tender and precious promises. Take that passage that is a Gospel within itself - John 3:16. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." Suppose we leave off the word "perish", and make it read like this - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him might have everlasting life." Are we to understand by that that those who do not believe will also have everlasting life? "Come unto me," He said again, "all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are we to understand from this that those who do not come will also find rest just as those who do?

Here is the most beautiful story that ever fell from
the lips of Jesus. A son left his father's house and went away into a far country, and wasted his substance in riotous living. But by and by he came home again and the father prepared him a feast and said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Did Jesus mean to imply in this story that if the prodigal had not come home, that if he had remained in the far country among the hogs, he would have still had the feast and the ring and the best robe? You can readily see that the most tender and gracious promises of Jesus become simply a jumble of nonsense if there is not some kind of hell. I believe in hell, then, on the authority of the scriptures, and especially on the authority of Jesus Christ.

2. I believe in hell, because it is a fact of experience. If there is nothing in this life that corresponded to hell, I confess I should not believe in a hell for the future. But folks do not have to die in order to go to hell. There are tens of thousands in our Christian land who are at this moment suffering the pangs of hell. I dare say there are some listening to me who believe in hell, not as a vague theory, but as a grim fact of experience. When the Psalmist said, "The pangs of hell got hold upon me," he was voicing the experience of an innumerable company.

A man called to see me some time ago to ask me if I believe in hell. "I know there's a hell, and I am in it." Some of you doubtless read of the wife of a certain New York millionaire who a few years ago became infatuated by a handsome young man named "Fred." They ran away together, searching for the heaven of free-love. But the end of their romance was that they were found locked in each other's arms before a gas jet. Upon the table was a note written by the woman. It read like this: We have been accustomed to laugh, Fred and I, at the moral law as a note
written by priests to frighten men and women into being good.
But we have learned through our own experience (there is a teacher
that we cannot misunderstand) we have learned through our own
experience that the wages of sin is death. Yes, many times worse
than death, hell on earth.

"But do you not know, "you ask indignantly, "that God
loves us too well to send us to hell?" Indeed I do. It is
impossible to understand the love of God. It is impossible to
believe that God ever sends any man to hell. But if you do, then
what makes hell, God who has left you free cannot keep you from
going there. Did not God love that desperate man that told me he
was in hell? Did He not love Fred and the woman with whom he
plunged into the dark? Indeed he did. He loved them as no
mother ever loves her laddie, but they deserted His love and He
not keep them from suffering the pangs of hell. And if He cannot
keep us from suffering the pangs of suffering in this world, when
we sin, how can we expect Him to keep us from suffering the pangs
of hell in any world?

The plain truth is that every man who sins carries his
own hell with him, and if I have hell in my heart, I cannot get
rid of it by passing from one room to another, or from one side
of the street to another, or from one side of the world to another.
No man can escape from it by passing from one side of the grave
to the other. If Jesus Christ cannot save me in the here and now,
surely I cannot trust to the shroud and to the coffin to do what
I had made it impossible for Him to do. I believe in hell, then,
because it is a fact of experience here, and being a fact of
experience here, we may be sure it will be a fact of experience
over there.

3. Then, I believe in hell because it is a necessity.
God has no way of getting any man into heaven who has hell in his own heart. When Judas died by his own hand, Luke did not say that he went to hell. He simply said that he went to his own place. He went where a hater of Christ, and a traitor to Christ would fit in. Certainly that place was not in heaven. Heaven would have been more bitter to Judas than the blackest of hells.

I read of a man recently who got on a street car that was crowded with certain joyous saints who were on their way to a revival meeting. The chap was greatly embarrassed. He got off at the first opportunity, and when he was among his own companions, he described his situation very fittingly by saying, "I got in a hell of a fix." That was what it meant to him. It was said that a little laddie stood one night in the city of New York, and pressed his face against a window pane, and looked in to where other children were having a part in a joyful feast. The hostess saw him and out of pity sent a servant to bring him in. But when he stood in the brightness of the light among those well-dressed children, he recognized how ragged he was, and how soiled were his rusty hands and feet. And he begged to be let out into the dark again. He was happier down in his ash box, where the cold north wind shoughed around the corner, because he didn't fit in in that home of cleanliness and beauty.

In the end of this earthly journey, you are going to the place where you fit in, wherever that is. If you have learned to love whatsoever things are true, and whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report, among these you will find yourself. But if you have learned to love basely among these baser things, you will find yourself. Suppose you were to go out to the speakeasies, to the houses of debauchery and herd the inmates together, and cast them down upon the streets
of the City of God. Do you think it would be heaven to them? It would be bitterest hell, and you would have to lock the door of heaven to keep them in.

We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that there must be a hell because there is a necessity, as necessary as a graveyard is for this world of ours. The other day the sons and daughters of a most sweet and gracious mother had that mother put into a coffin and carried away from her own home, and laid in the earth. What was the matter? Were they ingrates? Had they ceased to love her? No. The mother was dead, and to keep her in the home would not have brought any joy to her. It would have only polluted and destroyed the home. And here is a kind of burial ground for dead souls, souls that are dead in trespasses and in sin. We confess the horribleness of the doctrine, yet we cannot shut our eyes to it because it is the teaching of the Bible. It is the teaching of experience. It is a necessity.

III.

What kind of place is hell? In answer to this question, the Bible has very little to say. One thing that makes the Bible so credible is its fine reticence in giving details of the life to come, and has very little to say, either about heaven or hell. But this much we may say with authority:

1. Hell is a place, or a state, whichever you please to call it, apart from Jesus. When our Lord was going home, He said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself. But to those who reject Him He said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come." It is a place where no man knows the fellowship and friendship of Jesus. That is what makes it hell.
2. Because hell is a place without God, it is a place without hope. Man will not live without hope here. When hope is gone, they fling out of the world. But hell is a place where nobody hopes.

3. Hell, being a place without God, and without hope, it is a place of suffering. Is the fire of hell a literal fire? That question, the Bible does not answer. Personally, I am sure it is not. The sufferings of hell are the sufferings of the soul. And it is impossible to inflict spiritual wounds on that which is spiritual, but fire is a figure that represents a terrible fact. It is a torture of eternal evil, the pain of a tormenting memory.

IV.

But my one purpose in bringing this horrible message, rather, the one purpose of Jesus in sending this warning is to announce this good news that no man need suffer the pangs of hell, either here or hereafter. "I am come," he said, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it in abundance. He that believeth on the son, hath everlasting life. He has the day. He has it in the feebleness of old age. He has it as he flings out into the silence. He has it through eternity.

How shall we get hold on life? By simply committing ourselves to Jesus Christ. A right choice makes for a right character. A right character makes for a right destiny. If you make that right choice, nothing in earth or hell can keep you out of heaven now, or in the eternal hereafter. If you make this wrong choice, nothing, not even God can save you from the pangs of hell today and tomorrow. I, therefore, set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. I beg you for your own sake,
for the sake of all who love you, for the sake of all who need you, choose life.
WHO ARE YOU?

Who art thou?

John 8:25

The place of my text is of little consequence. This is a question that appears not only on the pages of the gospel but upon every page of human history for the last nineteen hundred years. These long centuries ago a teacher came from a carpenter shop down in Nazareth. He taught for some three years and then was executed as a common criminal. Yet, the personality of this man was so tremendous and compelling that it has gripped the attention of the world as none other. The most arresting and gripping man that ever lived in this world is this Jesus of Nazareth.

Who was he? "Who art thou?" amazed and bewildered men ask him when he was here. What manner of man is this? questioned the disciples with awed wonder as they discussed him among themselves. So men have questioned through the centuries. So we question still. For this Jesus instead of having grown less has grown greater with the passing of the years. Time takes most personality to fragments and throws them into oblivion. But not so with Jesus. He stands face to face with every generation. And we of today, if we are earnest men and women still turn our faces toward this magnet of centuries asking in awed wonder "Who are thou?"

Since so many have asked and are asking this question it is not surprising that all answers have not been the same. As far back as the first century there arose a group who claimed to be in line. Therefore, they called themselves Gnostics. These wise ones had come into the possession of the truths that were not known to the more ignorant fellows. They had discovered that the humanity
of Christ was only a figment. Though he impressed the ignorant as being a man of flesh and blood such was not the case. He was spiritual and spiritual only. He was God come down to earth, but not in the flesh. John in his Epistle combats this view declaring that he that declared that Jesus had come in the flesh was not only anti-Christ.

In the first century they were called Ebionites. These had a far simpler explanation of the personality of Jesus. They declared that he was man and man only. They declared that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among us. That he was not humanly divine, but human only. That he was the best of men and no more. This is not in harmony of much of the thinking of our day. A brilliant, modern minister declares in a recent sermon that the religion of Jesus consists in three fundamental beliefs: First, belief in God as Father. Second, belief in man as his son. Third, kindness one to another growing out of that relationship. He declares that any belief about the personality of Jesus has nothing to do with Christianity. But, however true this may be of modern Christianity it is emphatically not the Christianity of the New Testament.

I.

"Who art thou?"

In answering this question let us consider first the impression that Jesus made upon those who knew him. One day he locked up his carpenter shop and went out to preach. He came into Galilee, Mark tells us, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. Little by little he won wide attention. Mark's Gospel thunders with the tread of multitudes. But he gave himself especially to a little inner circle of twelve men. These were men of adventure. They were so taken captive by Him that they were willing to forsake all to follow him.

He went into a mountain and called them unto him. These twelve men lived
with Him for many months. They watched Him at his work. They were with Him also in his times of leisure when he led them on picnics into the mountains. When he was tired. They saw him when he was hungry. They had to wake him once from a deep sleep when they were frightened by a storm. They found him to be wise, but they heard him confess his ignorance. They learned of His might, but they heard him say of himself he could do nothing. He told them of his temptations. It is not surprising therefore that the figure that we meet all through the pages of the Gospel is that of a very human personality.

But while the first impression made upon the mind of men composing this inner circle that Jesus was the wisest and best of men that passed on to see something deeper in Him. Little by little they were gripped by the conviction that while he was man he was more. When therefore Jesus asked them one day what they thought of him, when he said "Who do you say that I am?" there was at first silence. Then Simon Peter voiced his own conviction. A conviction with which his fellow disciples agreed. "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God."

These men became as companions of Jesus. They were his friends. But the man with whom they had walked the common roadway of Galilee came to be God's son to them. He whom they had once honored as a teacher they came at last to worship. For I am not claiming that they are right, I am simply claiming that in the reading of the Gospels they will bear out that this is what happened. Jesus' friends thought Him at once human and divine.

II.

Then of still more importance is the testimony of Jesus Himself. In the days of his flesh our Lord did not claim to know all things. He did not claim to be all powerful. Yet, when his friends called him Lord and Master he did not rebuke them. When they said "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God", he did not tell them they were wrong. When Simon Peter went into the house of Cornelius and this sturdy Roman threw himself at his feet. Simon Peter lifted him up
saying "I am too am a man." Then the priests of Jupiter were about to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. These two saints rent their cloths in horror and would have none of it. But the honest and candid carpenter of Nazareth instead of rebuking Peter for calling him the son of God pronounced a blessing on him and declared that he had been illuminated and declared that flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father in Heaven.

It was this very human Jesus that when put under oath Caesar Caiaphas declared that he was the son of the Blessed and that here after they should see him come in the clouds of heaven. He claimed that even in the days of his flesh that he was able to give rest to all worry souls. He claimed that he had power to forgive sins. He claimed to be in charge of all the earth and the arbiter of human destiny. All these claims are made in the fourth Gospel which modern scholarship questions, but they are made in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

But if the claims of Jesus made in the synoptic gospels are true then what the writer of the fourth Gospel says of him is not in contradiction. Admitting that John is an interpretation of Jesus, any man who claims the fact that Jesus claims in Matthew, Mark, and Luke can pass on with consistency to utter those great "I am's" of the fourth gospel. Therefore, the devout friends of Jesus through the centuries have not been shocked when John makes him say "I am the Bread of Life. I am the good Shepherd. I am the resurrection and the life." They are not even shocked when they hear him say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." On the contrary the very best that they can hope for in God, they find in Jesus. The most that they can ask for is that God the Father be like the Christ of the Cross. The Christ that walked the highways of Galilee and Judea and died on the cross.

This then is the conviction that a candid reading of the Gospels brings to my own heart:—The disciples of Jesus believed him very human, but they believed that he was more. Jesus himself instead of correcting the false view seems to
have given it his entire approval. According to the New Testament he was at once divine. This does not mean that he was two personalities in one. If there was ever a unified personality Jesus was one. The writers of the Gospels do not undertake to explain that mystery of the personality of Jesus. Paul undertook to tell what he thought and gave, what I consider to be, the best explanation ever written. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, thought it not to be equal with God." That is, Jesus put aside his divine power in order to become man. He lived his life as a man. But whether Paul's explanation is right or wrong the impression of the Gospel is that he was a personality that is at once human and divine.

III.

"Who art thou?"

What is the answer of the Church? When Jesus was crucified all the wild dreams and hopes of the disciples of Jesus came to an end. Darkness and utter night settled down upon them. There was not even a horizon in their world here that might have looked for a dawn. The best that the bravest could say was that we hoped that it could have been He that redeemed Israel. But this pitiful and defeated handful of nobodies rallied and began to preach in the very city where their Master had been crucified only a few years before. And they preached with such amazing power and enthusiasm that they literally re-made the world.

Here is an effect that no man can deny. Such an effect demands an explanation. It must have had a cause. What was that cause? These once whipped and discouraged men claimed that the Master was crucified, and yet He was alive. They asserted this, not from hearsay, but from personal experience. Luke sums it up by saying "To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the
"Who Art Thou?"

Not only were they sure that the once crucified Christ that had been laid in the tomb in Joseph's garden, they were equally sure of his presence with themselves and within their own hearts. They faced a task that bristled with impossibilities. What they actually expected seems as utterly beyond their power as the of a universe. But they set themselves to this task not timidly and half-hearted, but with a wild abandon of enthusiastic joy. When they were publicly whipped, they counted it an honor. When they were threatened, they pressed the battle a little harder. When they were killed, they died with a song.

How do we account for this? How did they themselves account for it? They claimed that with them and within them was an unseen Presence. Here is a testimony that is typical of the testimony of the Christians of that day. Paul is writing from a prison cell. "But now, as for me, no man took my part, but all men forsook me. I pray God that it will not be laid to their charge. Not withstanding the Lord stood by me and gave me inward strength and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." These men according to their own testimonies were as sure of the living presence of Jesus Christ as they had been sure of it when they walked the common ways of life with Him before his death.

Being thus sure of the presence of the living Christ they were of a more dauntless courage and a boundless hope. They were absolutely sure that going forth to the conflict in the presence of him who had said "All authority has been given unto heaven and earth shall be given unto me," they did not go alone. Thus they were men of incredible power. As they went forth to preach the wilderness and solitary place did become glad and the desert blossomed as a rose. When their enemies reported of them, they said "they turned the world up-side-down." They were speaking the sober truth. Maybe they were wrong about Jesus. Maybe this Galilean peasant that they claimed to be alive and with them was rotting in his grave at Jerusalem. But this is what they believed; if they were all lies it was
a lie that was more dynamic than any truth that the world has ever known.

Now, the faith that re-made and energised the men of the early Church is one that has been vindicate by the experience of countless millions through the subsequent centuries. Right or wrong an innumerable company that no man can number have come to believe in the living Christ. They have come to believe in Him as an ever-present friend. Saving, empowering, and able to supply all our needs. The testimony to the truth of this comes from all sorts and conditions of men. Here is David Livingston ready to fly from the rages of African savages, but he recovers his courage and lies down to peaceful sleep resting on the promise "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." He declares he did this because he knew it was the words of a General of the strickest honor. Here is John Peyton. He is burying his wife and baby at the midnight hour in far off Metzodie. He has to perform the sad and solemn task alone. For the savages who he has gone to save threaten his life. How can he see it through? Here is his only answer. "I must have needs gone mad at that lonely grave, but for the presence of Jesus Christ." Testimonies akin to this are not widely isolated instances they are numerous among genuine Christians.

About two years ago a minister of our church passed to "where beyond these

times is peace." He was a missionary to the Mexicans of Texas. He moved among his simple and simple folks like a rich and rare perfume. There was a radiance and charm about him that made all who knew him take knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus. One day he told me something of his experience. With glowing face he said to me with simple frankness "Jesus Christ is just as real to me as my right hand." We can believe that the writers of the New Testament speak the truth because what they said is verified today in human experience.

IV.

But how about ourselves?
"Who do you say that I am?" ask Jesus. What does this mighty personality mean to you? What difference has he made? What difference does he make in your life? Maybe you are not yet sure that he can do for you today what these honest saints claim that he did for them. Maybe you think that in making such high claims for Jesus we are claiming too much. That he is not equal to the demands that some make upon him. But it is my conviction that the opposite is true. Our danger is not in making too much of Jesus Christ, but in making too little of Him.

Doctor Glass calls attention to this important fact. He demands that through the centuries the more the church and the individual has made of Jesus the stronger and better has been that church and that individual. Dr. Jowett was one of the ablest ministers of our time. When he was slowly slipping away with pernicious anemia he wrote to a fellow minister after this fashion: "We have preached a great gospel, you and I, but I want you to remember that Jesus Christ is greater than anything we have ever said about Him."

How shall you and I find him so? How should we be sure of Christ? All of us do not come to assurance by the same road. I know the road by which I came. Maybe that road would not appeal to you, but here is one that appeals especially to the scientific mind of our day. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know." Can Jesus Christ meet your need? Try him. Can he unite your broken personality? Can he send you out adequate to the heavy demands that life makes upon you? Try Him. If you doubt that he can meet your need, I answer you in the language of a friend that knew Him in the long ago, "Come and see."

If Jesus Christ is a man, and only a man I say
That all of all man's cares I will cling to Him
And to Him I will cling always.

If Jesus Christ is God, and only God I swear,
I will follow Him through Heaven and Hell,
The earth, and the sea and the air.
WHO ART THOU?

Then said they unto him, Who art thou?

John 8:25

During the earthly ministry of Jesus men were constantly asking Him questions. In our study of some of these questions it is altogether fitting that we should begin with this one,—"Who art thou?" Excited and perplexed men asked it of Jesus in the long ago. They ask it also of one another. "What manner of man is this?" questioned his disciples in awed amazement, one of another. Jesus was a man that could not be ignored. He was so compellingly helpful as to demand an explanation. He is so still. His personality is as yet the most tremendous fact of history. Therefore, we of today must ask this question of the long ago,—"Who art thou?" It is a question that will not down. It remains vital and pressing through all the changing years.

It is further fitting that we should begin with this question because it is fundamental. It is a question of supreme importance. This, I say, realizing that there are many who do not share this view. A brilliant preacher said in a recent sermon that our belief regarding the personality of Jesus has nothing to do with our being Christians. Whether he is right or wrong, it is not my purpose to argue here. But this I affirm with assurance, such a type of Christianity is certainly not the Christianity of the New Testament. When we turn to the gospels we cannot fail to see that, according to Jesus, He himself
is the very heart and center of Christianity. Everything depends upon our attitude to Him.

For instance, Jesus never asked men what they thought of his ethics. He never asked them what they thought of his example, nor of his attitude toward God. But he did ask this question, "What think ye of Christ?" He asked "Who do ye say that I am?" By asking this kind of question the Master shows Himself to be different from all other great teachers. These have sought to focus the attention of men, not upon themselves, but upon their message. Sometime ago I watched an expert auctioneer sell a painting. He did not stand in front of that work of art and talk about himself. So far as possible he put himself out of sight and called attention to the beauty of the picture that he was seeking to sell. This has been in some measure the method of all great teachers with the exception of Jesus. But he puts himself first. He claims, not simply to speak a message, but to be a message. He does not merely point out the way, He is the Way. He does more than teach the truth, he embodies the Truth. He claims, therefore, that the biggest question for every man is what they think of Himself.

I.

"Who art thou?" "What manner of man is this?" This haunting question has naturally received varied answers. Let us look at a few of the answers that come out of the long ago.

1. In the first century there arose a group of men who claimed to have a special and deep insight into the personality of Jesus. They claimed to be men, that in the language of the street, were men "in the know." Therefore, they called themselves Gnostics—the knowing ones. These men of insight reached this conclusion with regard to Jesus: He was God and God only. They denied
that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among us. They declared that the flesh of Jesus was only a phantom, that it had no reality. Thus they denied the humanity of Jesus. He was not a divine man, but God and God only. John was seeking to refute this contention when he declared that anyone who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh was not only not a Christian, but was anti-Christ.

2. Then there was another group known as Ebionites. These had an explanation of the personality of Jesus that was far more sane and reasonable. They acknowledged the humanity of Jesus. In fact, they claimed that he was man and man only. They were willing to confess that he was a good man, even the best of men. But they denied His unique deity. They did not believe that he was at once human and divine. The Gnostics have long since passed away. But those holding this latter view have been with us through all the Christian centuries. They are with us still.

3. Then there is the answer of the intimate friends of Jesus. One day this young carpenter turned his back upon his shop and set out to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God. He soon became vastly popular, wherever he went the ground fairly trembled with the tread of multitudes. But Jesus gave himself mainly to the training of twelve men. He chose these men carefully. They were hand-picked. He drew them to him by the winsomeness of his personality and by the thrill of the great task in which he offered them a part.

These men were the constant companions of Jesus for some two and one half years. They came to know Him intimately. They saw him in all kinds of situations. They saw him at prayer, they saw him at work. They were with him hours of leisure, when he led them on picnics into the mountains. They ate with him and slept with him, again and again. They heard him preach, and asked Him endless questions. They saw him when his eyes were tender with compassion. They saw him also when those eyes glowed and when his face flamed with hot anger. They found him very wise, but they heard him confess his ignorance. They found him strong, but they heard him say that he could of his own self do nothing.
Knowing Jesus thus intimately, what conclusion did they reach regarding Him? One day the Master took them to a quiet retreat at Caesarea Philippi to find the answer to this question. He began by asking these friends about the impression that he had made upon the people in general. "Who do men say that I am?" He inquired. The disciples gave an answer that to any other man would have been flattering. They told him that people regarded him as an Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets. But Jesus heard this without enthusiasm. Then he came to the supreme question. "Who do ye say that I am?" "After these months of fellowship what have I come to mean to you?" It was Simon Peter that answered the question. He said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." That is," Simon Peter said, "I find in Thee the same values that I find in God." Thus these men who began by being the companions and friends of Jesus end by becoming his worshippers. They are sure now with a conviction that becomes far more firm and clear after the Resurrection, that this Master of theirs is at once human and divine.

By this I do not mean to claim that these disciples had reached a perfect understanding of the mystery of the personality of Jesus. They did not undertake to explain just how he could be God come in the flesh. At least none of them understood it except St. Paul. He tackled the problem and gave, what I think, is the sanest answer that has ever been given. He declared that Jesus by His incarnation emptied himself. Therefore during the days of His flesh He did not possess the characteristics of God. He did not because he had laid these aside to become man. Thus Paul did not look upon Jesus as two personalities; He knew that if there was ever a unified man, that man was Jesus. But he shared with those who knew Jesus the conviction that He was the Word made flesh.

II.

But more important than the answer of his intimate friends is that of Jesus
himself. When we say to him "Who art thou?" if we can believe the writers of the New Testament, he affirms along with his friends that he was both human and divine. This he does at least in a three-fold fashion.

1. He makes this claim directly by what he says. Look again at this scene at Caesarea, Philippi. When Peter says "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God" Jesus does not rebuke him. He does not remind Peter, as any mere man would have done who was honest, that he was claiming too much. On the contrary he accepts Peter's confession with glowing approval and hot enthusiasm. "Blessed art thou Simon the son of Jonah," He cries "You have reached a conclusion that indicates that you have been divinely illuminated. Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

And what Jesus claims for himself here he claims in varied forms over and over again. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake," He affirms. The he goes on to say, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." To suffer for righteousness is the same as to suffer for his sake. And to suffer for his sake is to suffer for righteousness sake. He claims power on earth to forgive sins. He holds out his hands to the whole race of perplexed and burdened men and women and says, "I will give you rest." He claims to be the judge of all men and the arbiter of human destiny. He claims that when he goes away he is not going to be separated from those that love him. He asserts that after his death he is going to be with his own always, even unto the end of the world.

It is interesting to note also that these high claims are all made in the Synoptic Gospels. Modern scholarship has questioned the Fourth Gospel. It is said to be an interpretation of Jesus rather than a record of his words and deeds. But having accepted the claims that Jesus makes in the first three gospels, devout believers have not been shocked by the claims that the writer of the Fourth gospel tells us that Jesus made for himself. Having shared the confession by Peter, "Thou 

..."
"Who Art Thou?"

(\textit{Who art the son of the living God}) we are not shocked when we hear this Christ say "I am the bread of life." "I am the Resurrection and the life." "I am the Good Shepherd." We are not even shocked when we hear him say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus himself affirms by His own word that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

2. Then Jesus seems to me to vindicate this high claim by the kind of life that he lived. Here is a man who gave all his thought and his every energy to serve others. Here is a man who took upon himself every man's burden. Here is a man who died because of his love for, and his determination to save men. Had Jesus never come, I do not know what I should expect of God were he to come in the flesh, but since I have come face to face with Jesus, if the eternal God were to become flesh tomorrow and dwell among us, I should expect him to live exactly the kind of life that Jesus lived. Of this I am perfectly sure that God himself could not improve upon that matchless life that was lived in Galilee nineteen centuries ago.

3. Then Jesus confirms that he was the Word made flesh by what he was. The supreme miracle of the ages is the miracle of Jesus himself. Those who knew Him best claimed that he was sinless. They said of Him "He knew no sin." Jesus makes that same tremendous claim for himself. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He was not simply spotless, he was whole, he was perfect, he was complete. At the end of the journey he could say to his Father "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." His is the miracle of a perfect character. There can be no greater miracle than that.

But you answer, "How do we know that Jesus was perfect? How can we be sure that he never chose the lower road?" Well, we can begin with a fact upon which we all agree, that is this: Jesus was a good man. That is the conviction of believers and unbelievers. Now, one sure characteristic of goodness as we find it in other men is consciousness of sin. When we hear the confessions of guilt that
are most wet with tears and not with shame, they come, not from the scarlet sinners, but the choicest of the saints. But here is a good man, this best of men, who has no sense of sin at all. He teaches others to pray for forgiveness. But he himself never once prayed such a prayer. He weeps over, even dies for the sins of others, but never once is he troubled by a sense of personal guilt. Here is an achievement that is beyond the reach of mere man.

"What if our yet, what mote, what flaw, what laps,
What least defeat, or shadow of defeat,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,-
O what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ."

III.

Now the answer of Jesus has been the answer of the Church. These early friends of Jesus saw their Master crucified. That struck a death-blow to all their hopes. That put out every star in their sky. It turned their garden of life into utter desert. The best they could say for themselves was "We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel." At the going of their Master they became weak with the weakness of black despair. But something happened that completely re-made them. From cowards and defeated men they became courageous and victorious. From bewildered weaklings they became dynamic almost beyond belief. What wrought the change? They claimed that their crucified Master had risen from the dead. They claimed that by so doing he was not merely a fact of history, but a fact of experience. They claimed that he was both with and within them as a living presence.
Here is a word that is typical. "At my first defense no man took my part, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and gave me inward strength, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." In fact this same man who had not known Jesus in the flesh declared that there was no question that one could ask about himself that he could not answer in terms of Jesus Christ. "Paul, how did you come to live?" "Christ," is the answer. "How have you continued to live through these stormy and tempestuous years of persecution?" "Christ." "What is the motive of your life?" "Christ, again is the answer." "What is its goal?" "Christ." Every question, I repeat, that one might ask Paul could be answered in terms of Christ. This was the case because he could say "For me to live is Christ."

Not only did these early saints claim that Jesus Christ was to them a living reality, but they vindicated that claim by the lives they lived. They were the kind of men that we should expect those to be who lived in the realization of the divine presence. When they were publicly whipped, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. When they were cast into prison, they sang. When confronted by impossible tasks they faced them with a courage and with a dauntless optimism that made them conquerors and more than conquerors. Thus in a few short years they banished age-old evils and made the wilderness and solitary place to become glad, and the desert to rejoice and to blossom as a rose. And all through the centuries those who have shared their faith, have shared their joy, and their zeal, and their power. Dr. Glover calls attention to the fact that the more the Church has made of Jesus the more radiant has been that church, and the more mighty. It is impossible to make too much of Jesus. It is infinitely dangerous to make too little of him. Therefore, if, in finding values in Jesus that we can find only in God is all a lie, it is a lie that is more dynamic than any truth that the world has yet known.
Let me close by asking what is your answer to this question. "What think you of Christ?" What does this supreme personality mean to you? Is he merely a good man of the long ago, or is he a living presence? Is he a beautiful example, or is he a friend that sticketh closer than a brother? Is he a dim figure of history, or is he a living reality to your heart, "closer than breathing and nearer than hand and feet?"

I ask these questions in the faith that everyone of us may have an experience of the living Christ. We may say with one of his friends of the long ago "My Lord, and my God." About two years ago I had a beautiful friend who passed to where "beyond these voices there is peace." He had been a great worker, he had also been a great sufferer. But his suffering had ripened and sweetened him till there was a charm about him that was more winsome than the perfume of flowers. One day he said to me very humbly, and yet with a ring of irresistible reality "Jesus Christ is just as real to me as this right arm." There have been many saints like that. There is a roadway to spiritual certainty open for everyone of us.

"But how can I find it,"you may ask wistfully. I can't believe all that you claim for Jesus. I believe that he was the best of men, but I cannot believe that he was God come in the flesh. Well, I answer, start from there. That is where the first disciples of Jesus began. When the Master passed their way and said "Follow me." They had no theological views with regard to Jesus. But under the spell of his personality and under the thrill of the high task to which he called, they made a beginning. Then little by little he led them into spiritual certainty. So it may be for you. Only dare to begin where you are. Be true to the highest you find in Him and He will not disappoint you. It is the Master himself who says,"If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know."