



You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

GOLDEN SHEAVES

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CONTENTS

(30 of 127 pages selected)

Chapter 1 "THE PATTERN IN THE MOUNT"
Chapter 2 THE TOTAL NATURE OF SIN
Chapter 3 THE UNFOLDING OF SALVATION
Chapter 4 A PERFECT CONSECRATION
Chapter 5 THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT
Chapter 6 SPIRIT-FILLED
Chapter 7 FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT
Chapter 8 THE REJECTION OF THE SPIRIT
Chapter 9 THE LOSS OF THE SPIRIT
Chapter 10 SOUL YEARNING FOR REST
Chapter 11 CONDITIONS OF ENTERING
Chapter 12 POSSESSING THE LAND
Chapter 13 FOUR IMPORTANT DUTIES
Chapter 14 DIVINE GUIDANCE
Chapter 15 PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS
Chapter 16 GOD'S OVERRULING POWER
Chapter 17 "BEFORE HIM"
Chapter 18 "LITTLE IN THEIR OWN SIGHT"

Chapter 19 RETRIBUTION
Chapter 20 ABUNDANCE
Chapter 21 TEMPTATION
Chapter 22 FAVORITISM
Chapter 23 ONE-SIDEDNESS
Chapter 24 RELIGIOUS PROFANITY
Chapter 25 HINDRANCES
Chapter 26 ODDITIES
Chapter 27 NUMBERING ISRAEL
Chapter 28 DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES
Chapter 29 THE KNOWLEDGE OF SELF
Chapter 30 THE TWO VERDICTS
Chapter 31 THE THREE JUDGMENTS
Chapter 32 THE SEVEN THOUSAND
Chapter 33 "BREAD UPON THE WATERS"
Chapter 34 THE COMING TRIUMPH
Chapter 35 THE AFTERMATH OF LIFE



10. SOUL YEARNING FOR REST

We are told that there is a belt of meteoric stones flying around the sun in a certain orbit. It is this vast and restless procession that our earth runs across every thirty years or more, and we call them falling stars. Having come out from the sun, they will be forever in disturbed movement as long as they are separated from him. To fall back into the bosom of the great orb from which they come is their only possibility of rest.

In like manner human souls made by God, and coming out from Him, can only find peace and contentment in Him. Life as we see it in the unsaved masses of men is nothing but an endless procession after rest. We cross the path of the unconverted, pick up some of the stragglers, and know what all of them must sooner or later find out, that there is no calm for the soul but in God.

The very restlessness we see in men, their unsatisfied coming and going, their rushes in every direction for pleasure, declare the longing for something not yet possessed.

Much of the traveling we see is simply an endeavor to find peace by change of locality. Whiskey drinking on the part of men, and morphine eating upon the part of women, is another vain effort for satisfaction by drowning present care in liquor or opiates. A good deal of novel reading of the sensational sort is also to be understood and explained in this same light. Even the luxurious house-building and furnishing of today reveals an additional mistake of seeking to meet the cravings of the spirit with comforts that are purely material.

God calculates on this very longing of the soul for rest, to draw it to Him. But men seem to learn this lesson last, that God only can tranquilize and satisfy. If the three hundred and sixty degrees around the horizon should each represent a door, we would see many knocking at every door for spiritual contentment and heart happiness before looking up to Him, who alone can give such things.

In regeneration partial rest is found. New, sweet and blessed is the change from darkness to light, and from the slavery of sin to the service of God. But there are fluctuations, ebbings, and inner commotions and storms in the converted life that are not compatible with perfect rest. There are cries still left in the soul and hands reaching out for perfect spirit-rest, and the Bible declares that such can be had only through Jesus Christ.

Many of us wronged the Redeemer here for years. We thought that the experience we possessed in justification and regeneration was the best He could do. We were almost persuaded once, that our hope was only, to be realized in the graveyard and in heaven.

Meantime the Lord did not leave us to ourselves, in this mistaken judgment of His salvation, and provision for the present longings and needs of the heart. So He sent many things into our lives to arouse us to see and then receive what He has even in this life for them who love Him. **One thing He used with the writer** was an elderly woman who in the face of every kind of sorrow and trial wore a gentle, patient, even joyful smile on her luminous countenance that nothing could remove. Her husband was trifling, her children brought her great grief, her house was about to be sold over her head, bitter poverty came in upon the family, ill health attacked her body, and yet we never saw her become impatient, utter a murmuring word, or lose that peaceful smile. Her very eyes seemed to speak of a calm way down in her soul that was too deep to be fathomed. She told us that it was fathomless and that Christ gave it.

This woman's face was like a signboard pointing steadily in a certain direction where God wanted us.

Another thing used of God in our case was a hymn we heard sung one night by several hundred people. The singers were a choral band used in a great evangelistic meeting. We do not know the name of the religious song, and could not catch its words; but the strain itself was the instrument of God used to declare some things to the soul. It seemed to tell of a life altogether surrendered to God, but misunderstood, abused, and rejected like Christ. Under the strange interpreting power of the melody we could see the lonely man battling for the truth, and keeping sweet in spirit and true to duty and God through every kind of assault and temptation. Suddenly the strain swept out from the minor chords into a perfect burst of triumph. There was a tempest of voices on the platform, but under a practiced leader it was a storm of melody, and through it all was presented to the mind the picture of the man who had struggled so hard, getting home at last. Amid the rejoicing of angels, the shouting of the redeemed, and the smile of the Lord, the victor over all earth's woes could be seen fairly staggering into heaven and falling at the feet of the Son of God, who, descending the steps of glory, lifted him up, saying, "Well done,

good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

The writer, sitting in a dark corner of the vast hall, heard a voice in the hymn which was not heard by all, and beheld a picture which was not seen by everybody. He felt that the Saviour had touched the song and made it open as it did for the sake of the hungry soul in the audience. Then and there the listener saw the life that can be hid with Christ in God, and that in the midst of the wrath of man, strife of tongues, and every storm of life, be kept in perfect peace.

A third thing used of God was the shout of a preacher. He was a holiness preacher, and had been sent for to present a full gospel to a prominent church in a large old Southern city. Morning after morning and night after night the messenger of God faithfully declared the truth, and opened up the wonderful doctrine and experience of holiness obtained by consecration and faith and prayer. But the people did not want it. They cared not for the deep things of God. So there were listless ears, and resisting hearts that like a wall seemed to throw back the balls and arrows of truth. One day in a morning service we were all on our knees, when suddenly the preacher referred to gave a shout that went to every heart. It was not a throat shout, but a soul cry, and pierced every breast, while tears were made to rush to all eyes.

Glancing up we saw him with his face as white as marble, eyes closed, while the countenance was uplifted. The blessing upon him was so great that the blood seemed to have receded upon the heart, and left the face colorless. He evidently had no thought of where he was, while those moving cries continued to fall from his lips. Every person in the audience seemed to go all to pieces under his voice. It sounded in a spiritual sense so far off, so close to heaven, so near to God, that people wept convulsively under it. We saw at once what had happened, -- that God, seeing how His servant had been treated, quietly touched him and called him away to the top of an exceeding high mountain of glory. It was as though He had said, “My son, they do not believe you. They do not want what you are preaching about. They do not want even to hear you. Come up here to me, and talk with me awhile.” And so God caught him away from us, and, like Moses, he seemed to be seeing God, and speaking with Him face to face, while we in a kind of judgment were left in the plain.

That lonely, faraway and yet rapturous shout convinced me of the “higher life,” the “deeper rest,” in a word the blessing of entire sanctification, where the soul gazes upon Christ, feeds on Him, and is perfectly delighted with and satisfied in Him.

We remember that we fell upon our face and with bitter sobs cried out, “Oh, Lord, I want to get up there where he is.” And a sweet, gentle voice whispered in the heart, “You can come.” And we came.



11. CONDITIONS OF ENTERING

The instant that Christ died, we are told in the Scripture that the veil of the Temple was rent. For centuries it had hung between the Holy and Holiest of the Temple or Tabernacle, declaring by its presence that something in the way of grace was hidden from the people of God. When Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished,” and bowed His head and died, this veil was not torn down, but rent from top to bottom. The edges of the severed curtain, hanging together and so still hiding something, taught that there remained a mystery of holiness beyond; while the rent itself, according to Paul, signified

that the way into the Holiest was now open.

With all this divine provision for admission, the apostle as quickly noticed certain other conditions which must be observed if we would enter the Holiest, or, in other words, obtain the blessing of entire sanctification.

One of the requisites is stated in the words, [“Our bodies washed with pure water.”](#)

Here is a symbolical reference to regeneration. As the priests washed at the laver before entering the first or outer room in the Tabernacle, so must we be cleansed with the washing of regeneration to be candidates for admission into the inner sanctuary.

The unconverted man cannot receive the experience of holiness. The backslider must seek the cleansing laver again if he would know the mystery of the Gospel. Nothing unclean passes over that holy way.

Men may deride and belittle the second work of grace, but when the time of seeking the grace has come, and the hour of disputing has departed, they will discover that the great spiritual boon is to be had only with a great price; that it is while walking in the light as He is in the light, that then and there the blood cleanses; that after abstaining from all appearance of evil, the promise is that God will sanctify us wholly.

A second requisite or condition is [the possession of a good conscience](#).

It is a remarkable fact that we can get nothing from God with an accusing heart. The sense of inward reproof and condemnation coming from our own souls utterly prevents us from believing or receiving. As John puts it, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart.” Then he adds, “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

The statement is wonderful and yet natural. Many from experience have found it true, and can say with an immovable certainty that it is impossible to obtain spiritual blessings of any kind while the conscience bears testimony to unrectified conduct. The faith faculty seems to be paralyzed, all upward soarings of the soul cease, and all expectancy from God ends when there rests upon the heart the memory of unrighteous things which we fail to confess to God or make right with men.

On the contrary, the spirit fairly bounds upward and Godward when conscious of its own integrity.

The thing buried under the tent has not only a marvelous way of sapping strength and destroying joy, but of sweeping away true boldness and courage. Let it be dug up, surrendered to God, and devoted to destruction with the cordial consent of mind and heart, and the man in a moral sense is transfigured.

We used to marvel at listless prayers, and the sluggishness of people who never seemed able to get anything from God. But we do so no longer. The difficulty in nine cases out of ten is located several feet under a tent. They walk anxiously around a certain neighborhood, their eyes repeatedly rove in that direction, the voice has an uncertain ring, and it is manifest that all is not well within.

Meantime God is greater than our heart. What wisdom is in this simple expression! He waits for us to say I have done all, before He does His all. We must sanctify before He sanctifies.

A third requisite mentioned by Paul is [“a true heart.”](#)

We get light on this word by looking at objects and persons that suggest or illustrate the fact of steadfastness, devotion, etc. So we are accustomed to speak of a faithful wife, who, in long absences of the husband, is true to his memory and interests, who keeps him

in mind, who sends him frequent letters of loving remembrance and counts the days to his return.

Then a polarized needle is faithful. With all its shakings and tremblings occasioned by hands outside, the arrow is in wild unrest until it points again to its star, and then it settles down into peace because in harmony with a vast orb billions of miles away.

Many persons who seek sanctification impress us as not having the “true heart.” Not only fitful seeking and variable moods show this, but the different way they act under changed circumstances.

For instance, in a morning meeting, where the atmosphere is deeply spiritual and only Christians are present, they will come to the altar, but at the night service, where worldly acquaintances and unbelieving members of the family are in the audience, they sit like fixtures in the pews. They talk freely of their belief in the blessing with the friends of holiness, but change their spirit and conversation when situated among the opposers of sanctification.

Again, they seek ardently for the blessing for a few hours, and then allow themselves to fall in a listless and idle state. Everything declares that the true heart is not here. Nothing here to remind one of the patient, loyal, devoted wife and nothing to suggest that almost pathetic movement of the compass needle which is all tremulous and distracted until it points faithfully to its beloved North.

We once saw a young man seek the blessing of sanctification in one of our Southern towns. At the close of the morning service at noon, when others left the church for their homes he remained kneeling at the altar. A small group of friends lingered for a while, but they soon departed. The sister of the young man, with full eyes and heart, knelt near him, but as the housekeeper of her father’s home was also compelled to withdraw. In the afternoon some one passing the church glanced through the half-closed door and saw the faithful seeker still in the same place and position. Near the close of the day people in going by saw the same patient figure bowed at the altar, while the shadows of the evening were filling the building. At six o’clock a small company gathered for a prayermeeting; and in consideration of the solitary one at the chancel, held a brief service in the other end of the church, and prayed in whispers. In great sympathy and tenderness their eyes fell upon the distant form that they found bowed in prayer when they entered, and which they had left engaged in silent supplication to God

When the congregation began to gather, at half-past seven, the young man was still seen at the altar with body and face bowed as if in utter forgetfulness of every earthly being. Just as the first hymn was being sung, his faith culminated, the power came down, the veil was rent for him, and with a glad cry the faithful seeker of seven hours entered into the Holiest. He came in with “a true heart.”

A fourth condition is “[full assurance of faith.](#)”

Here is not only faith, but faith at its best and strongest. No shadow of doubt is allowed to fall upon the mind. No question of God’s word is permitted to arise in regard to the divine ability and willingness to perform the work and grant the blessing. The still more important fact that God receives and sanctifies even now, is believed in and clung to as one would hold to a great rock in the midst of a flood of waters.

In “full assurance of faith” is the language of Paul. Just as a person goes confidently into a room to meet one who is awaiting him there; just as he passes over the threshold and through the door without a single doubt that the wife he expects is there; so in like manner, yes in greater confidence, in full assurance of faith, we part with our hands the rent curtain, and walking boldly into the Holiest, instantly realize the incoming of Christ

into the purified and exulting soul, and find the blessing we have been craving all the days of our life.



12. POSSESSING THE LAND

It was one thing for the Jews to cross over the Jordan into Canaan, and another thing altogether to possess the land. Years after their entrance Joshua said to them, "Why are ye so slack to possess the land?" They had overrun a portion, but there were numbers of lofty hills and mountains, beautiful valleys and fruitful plains which they had not scaled, explored and cultivated.

In like manner it is one thing to obtain the blessing of sanctification, and it is another to enter upon its many privileges and full blessedness.

As we study the sanctified people today we find them divided into three classes: First, those who have crossed the Jordan years ago, but have never left its banks. They use the same expressions, have no better experience than that of the first day or week, and are, so to speak, camping in the same place. These are the ones who are continually slipping into the Jordan, and getting washed back to Moab. They have to be picked up and dried, and ferried back to Canaan every summer at some camp-meeting.

A second class are those who have crossed and gone some distance into the experience, when suddenly, after a few years, they stop and never advance again. The whole case is full of mystery to many, but the explanation is that something has been buried under the tent, and God will go up with them no more to battle. They have stopped short in the midst of a life all aglow; and though years have passed they go no deeper nor farther into holiness. Sermons, books, papers and meetings which they continue to read and attend seem powerless to bring back the glory, and restore that wonderful push and go in their lives which once everybody most plainly beheld. Like the first class the question could very properly be asked of them "Why are ye so slack to possess the land?"

A third class sweep on and over the whole of Canaan. They scale the mountains of joy, penetrate its valleys of rest, drink of its rivers of pleasure, and till its plains of duty. They allow no spiritual fruit to go untasted, and own the country from Dan to Beersheba, or, in other words, enter upon and enjoy the experience in all its wideness and fullness.

They possess the land, we say. What does this mean, what is it to possess the land?

In general terms it means that there should be a steady advancement on all spiritual lines; that there should be an ever-deepening experience; that there should be a continual growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and that the fruits of the Spirit which were brought over into the Canaan life should become larger, better and more luscious; that just as Canaan was a better country for fruits than the wilderness, so the sanctified heart should be a better soil for the Christian graces, than when that same heart had in it the stone of inbred sin.

But to particularize. If we are in the Canaan experience we should enjoy a deeper peace.

We can understand how a person on an ocean steamer would in the first few days feel decidedly nervous, but when the vessel has for days carried one over billows and through fierce storms, that anxiety should give way to deep confidence and even tranquillity. So we can understand how at first people who enter upon the experience of holiness feel some apprehension about the keeping power, and as to what the future holds for them.

But when for days and weeks they discover that this peculiar grace of God is sufficient for every condition, that it preserves and upholds in all circumstances of life, then the natural result should be a profound and ever-deepening peace.

Second, there should be an increasing sweetness of spirit.

One of the things promised in Canaan was honey. This stands for the tender loving spirit the blessing brings. Now as the land was said to flow with honey, then it follows that the deeper one goes into the country the more of this beautiful liquid treasure should be found. In a word, the sanctified should steadily become sweeter spirited as the years roll on.

We do not mean a sickening sweetness; nor a namby-pamby, mawkish sentimentality and softness. Not molasses, but honey. The real, genuine sweetness of Christ in the soul.

Think of a man starting out with a beehive, and after twenty years having still only one. He should have had at least an hundred, and the industrious man would have owned that number. Certainly we ought not to be put to shame by an individual running a bee farm. When we see sanctified people becoming vinegary we fear that they are already out of Canaan and back in the wilderness. And when they grow bitter we have reason to dread that they are still farther back and are in the gall of Egypt.

Truly, if we possess the land, we who began with a single hive of honey should in a few months or years have enough in the shape of love, gentleness, kindness, pity and sympathy for a whole community.

Third, there should be a profounder joy.

One of the promised fruits of Canaan was grapes. The land was said to be one of vineyards, while the presses burst out with wine. Wine is a Bible figure for spiritual exaltation and joy. The teaching then in the imagery is, that just as one going deeper into Canaan would find more vineyards and wine, so, in the Sanctified life there should ever be an increasing soul gladness. Instead of drying up, our heart presses should burst forth with new joys and fresh spiritual rapture.

He would be a poor gardener who set out a grape plant, and after ten years had no more than he began with. The hillsides should have been covered with a beautiful increase, and the house fairly crowned with a clambering vine of richness and beauty.

Even so with us. Our joy should grow as we press on in holy living. Nothing could be more convincing and attractive to beholders than such spiritual fruitfulness, such holy gladness shining in the eyes, welling up in the heart, and transfiguring the life.

Truly we can then sit under our "own vine" and need not go to others for comfort. We have a vineyard in the life, a joy plant covering us as a shelter, and a greater inner gladness flowing like an intoxicating wine in the soul, with full and increasing measure.

Fourth, there should be a greater faith.

If a person has been introduced to you and endorsed by a trustworthy friend, the acquaintanceship begins with a measure of trust. But when months and years have rolled by and you find this individual, now a friend, always reliable and true and faithful in every changing circumstance to be depended on, then your confidence has grown so that it can scarcely be shaken.

So we knew Jesus already when we entered the experience of sanctification. But when after months and years, filled with all the peculiar experiences, tests, difficulties and assaults coming to the sanctified, we discover that Christ never fails us, that He always relieves and delivers, always fulfills His promises, then has our faith grown from a seed

to a tree whose great boughs protect and whose shadow rests us. We have now such a confidence that no matter what happens, we cling to, believe in, and rest assured that the Saviour will bring us out all right. A sweeter trust, a profounder confidence, a mightier faith seems to be the natural outcome of the life in Canaan with its deepening acquaintance with the Son of God.

Finally, our victories should be easier and greater.

Jericho was the greatest triumph the Israelites had up to their entrance into the promised land. But Jericho was not the mightiest victory they had after that, by any manner of means. To take that city they required six or seven days of marching, an encirclement of the place thirteen times and a great deal of noise. But the day came in following years when they won a mightier victory while standing still and playing on harps. And at another place God overwhelmed their enemies by throwing down stones upon them from heaven, and all they had to do was to stand and behold the salvation of the Lord.

In like manner our victories in the life of holiness should be greater and easier as we sweep deeper into the experience.

We have noticed that when persons are first sanctified, there is still a great leaning upon, and use of old-time weapons. There is still a trust in the bow and spear, and an almost unconscious use of severe methods in dealing with all kinds of opponents.

After a while they discover that rams' horns may do well, but harps are better. The first may stun and deafen, but the other goes to the heart and moves the soul. They also gradually get to see that if God has entrusted them with the sharp razor of truth it was intended for a milder and more merciful use than the cutting off of men's heads.

Still the advance goes on, and the man deep in the Canaan experience leaves it to God to fight his battles and cast stones of conviction from heaven into the breasts of his enemies. The astonishing vision to the world is that of a victor who has not laid his hand on a single carnal weapon, nor lifted a solitary stone to cast in self-defense; but keeping sweet all the time, and committing all to God, faces undismayed the world, the flesh and the devil, while God gives him the greatest victories of his life.



13. FOUR IMPORTANT DUTIES

Paul had been speaking of the "Holiest;" how to enter in by faith; and concludes the figure with the mention of certain duties we should not forget after passing through the veil which had been rent for our admission.

One thing urged is that we hold fast our profession.

It is not possession he is talking about, but the proclamation by tongue and cleaving by life to the wonderful experience God has given us.

Men may scout as they will about our oft-repeated testimony to full salvation; and say that it is a poor experience which has to be proclaimed in order to be retained. Nevertheless it is noticeable that the person who puts the bushel of silence over the holy flame with which God glorified his soul will soon have neither light nor heat left to tell about.

We have never testified distinctly to sanctification as a present grace, but we felt on concluding that we stood on advanced spiritual ground, a greater strength was in the soul,

a sweeter joy in the heart, and the skies felt a mile nearer.

A second duty is to “provoke unto love and good works.”

This is a very remarkable expression. We have seen people who provoked others to anger, and retaliation. We have seen individuals by rasping speech and unpleasant manner, by a tale-bearing spirit and nagging tongue, set a home or social circle by the ears. But here is the apostle exhorting us to provoke people to love and good works. And, thank God, it can be done.

We once heard a man say that he thought he was liberal until he got acquainted with a Christian who was giving three-fourths of his income to God. That sight revolutionized his own methods; and a steady flow of greenbacks began to leave his purse in a heavenward direction from that time. He had been “provoked” unto good works.

A gentleman told the writer that his devotional habits had been marvelously affected by the sight of a preacher stretched for two hours on his face in prayer. He, was by that silent spectacle “provoked” into closer communion with God.

A preacher became much irritated over the way he thought he had been treated at a campground.

His displeasure became speedily manifest. Numbers of Christians severely let him alone, thinking that it would do him good to feel the weight of the house which he had dragged down upon himself.

Let him eat of his own bitter dish, which he has fixed up, was the thought and words of a number.

But there was an elderly minister on the ground who had gone deeper into the Christ life, knew human nature better, and was himself saved, through and through. He sought out the cloudy-faced brother, reminded him of what he had done for the cause of Christ, how he was loved and appreciated by the brethren, and assured him of his own unchanging esteem and affection. With his genial face, kindly tongue, and arm thrown about the brother’s neck, the heart melted, tears flowed, and Spring, with its warmth and gladness, suddenly burst out of the middle of December. No one has ever had reason to complain of that brother since. He was provoked back unto love and good works.

A third duty is laid down in the words, “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.”

There is a great temptation to do this ever and anon in life. Sometimes the deadness of the pulpit will be the argument; sometimes the thought that we are not wanted is the motive. Various and adroit are the efforts of the adversary to make us secede, go into retirement, withdraw from religious service or cut loose entirely from the church.

Of course it is distressing not to be understood in one’s own family, social and ecclesiastical circle; and it is heartrending to hear the holy doctrine and experience ridiculed and denied that you know to be true. But what if God should want one to be a martyr, and desires the people to see how a sanctified man can be abused and maligned and yet keep sweet. Then surely if we forsake the post of suffering we have made a grievous mistake and hurt the cause we love.

We read once of a man who told his preacher that he saw no need of congregational worship, that he served God alone, and best when all to himself. The preacher in reply took the tongs and removing a red-hot coal of fire laid it by itself on the hearth, and then leaning back in his chair watched it. In a few seconds it lost its intense flow, began to darken here and there, and finally became a cold, black, fireless, lifeless lump of matter. Both men had silently watched the change, and when it was complete, the man at whom

the preacher directed this sermon in parable, said: "I see it. You mean that if I stay to myself away from God's people, I will lose my light, warmth and fire. I won't stay away. I will come back."

One thing the advanced Christian must remember, and that is, he is to mingle with God's people not alone for the benefit that will come to himself, but for the good he will do to them.

The fourth duty is that we should "exhort one another daily."

Not abuse one another. Not slash one another to pieces with censure and pitiless judgment. No, the word is exhort.

We heard a man claiming full salvation get hold of a brother for some real or fancied fault, and such a tongue-lashing we never heard equaled in life. The man thus dressed down never opened his lips.

We have read letters that were misnamed letters of brotherly counsel and rebuke, and such were the stabs and blows throughout, that the periods were suggestive of leaden bullets, and the handwriting appeared like lines of swords and bayonets. As we once said on a public occasion, God entrusted His servant with a razor to shave off some superfluous hair, and that servant became so wrought up that he cut off the man's head. He started out to be like Jesus, and wound up a Jehu. This is the peculiar peril of all young and newly sanctified people. Great light and a burning zeal have come, and now let everybody look out or somebody will be hurt. They make the mistake that the misguided subjects of Henry of England made who thought to please the king by the slaying of his servant. They commit even a greater mistake. For suppose a father in anguish over the sinful life of his son should cry out that the boy was breaking his heart. "Some friend of the father, hearing the cry and witnessing his suffering, takes a dagger, finds the unfaithful son, and buries the blade in his heart. Coming back, he tells the father what he has done, and is at once greeted by him with a heartbroken wail, 'Oh, my poor boy!' and then falling senseless at his feet."

No need to explain the parable. One thing is certain, that we will never please God by crushing one of His children.

In one of our Southern cities a member of the church began to fall away. As this took place, a number of people gathered up their skirts, and focused their eyeglasses to see the final plunge. The pastor, who is now in heaven, had the spirit which Paul speaks of in the tenth chapter of Hebrews.

He overtook the brother one Sabbath night as he was walking from the church to the parsonage.

Slipping his arm through that of the wanderer, and later putting his arm about him, he told the silent man how he had missed him from church; of how others regretted his absence; of the good he had done there in other days; and of the good he could yet do if he would return to Christ and duty. The moonlight did not fall more beautifully and soothingly to the eye all around them than did the lovely spirit and healing words of the servant of God come upon the heartsick, life-tired man at his side.

With the tears filling his eyes, and heart all melted and broken, the backslider turned from his wandering that night, and came back to the church, and still better to duty and to Christ. The wandering sheep, and the faithful under shepherd who went after him, are both with the great Shepherd in the skies today. And all three are glad.

May we all do more exhorting and less abusing and criticizing; The heart is so easily wounded.

The soul is so quickly discouraged and hurt to death, that if we do not have a boundless and pitiful love we cannot do the work God wants to have done. The wounded spirit does not want a slashing Jehu, but a sympathizing Jesus.



14. DIVINE GUIDANCE

All of us who are really Christians believe in the directing and leading power of God in our lives.

Sometimes the influence is felt to be a drawing in a certain direction, and again there is a conscious check or restraint. We feel warned against taking steps that apparently seem all right, and are suddenly stopped in relating matters of a confidential or sacred character to obviously sincere and good people. A visit is made, or a trip is put off through a sweet, gentle, steady influence within, and which instantly becomes sweeter the instant we obey.

Of course there are people who have gone off on this line into extravagance and fanaticism. But this is the case with every doctrine and truth of Christianity, and as we do not surrender the great experiences of grace because of mistaken individuals, so we cannot think of giving up the blessed doctrine of the divine providence and leadership in life, because of some extremists, who wait for God to tell them to do what they ought to have sense enough to perform at once for themselves, and who claim special manifestations, impressions and leadings where none are needed.

Leaving this class and their fanciful life out, yet the main truth remains that God will lead and guide the willing and obedient soul. Even more, that he strives with our ignorant and honest deceptions and mistaken friendships and blundering intentions, and labors to bring good and victory, wisdom and grace out of it all for us. Who has not felt after great efforts put forth to carry out some cherished plan or design, and one not necessarily sinful, that an invisible hand brought it all to naught; that a greater power secured very different results?

But we go back to the feature of a conscious guidance, a sweet, gentle pressure upon the soul, under which is made clear to the Christian the direction God wishes him to follow. Here, indeed, many can wonderingly, gratefully and adoringly speak. God would deliver from all kinds of hurtful entanglements, and so we doubt not that many of His listening, observing and obedient children have been delivered from friends who would have been false, have been kept from business partnerships, and prevented from marriages that would have led to a life of misery if not to ruin.

The rebutting statement will be made that many of God's people do make these mistakes and enter into various kinds of entanglements that bring sorrow beyond calculation, and in some cases backsliding and loss of the soul. Our reply is that we doubt not they were warned and striven with by the Spirit, and that God tried to lead them differently, but they were heedless, careless, prayerless and disobedient at the time, and so the calamity came, for God cannot force the human will.

We know of a number, both male and female, who were impressed of God not to marry as they did, and the whole after life became clouded and miserable. In such cases, if God saw in the future that there would have been a happy religious change and blessed adaptation, we doubt not there would have been no warning. The deep impression not to marry a certain man or woman means that it will never turn out right if the relation or union is entered upon.

When the writer was in his early ministry he was urged to come to a town a hundred miles away and hold a meeting of a week. As he was packing his valise to leave he was deeply impressed not to go. Being then young in these things, of which we are now writing, and full of zeal, rather than knowledge, he dismissed the thought, though it

returned repeatedly, and took his departure. He, with many strange hindrances, reached the place, but the most unprecedented bad weather set in, and no meeting could be held. Returning after a few days of utter failure, he found a case of desperate sickness at his house and that his presence had been needed from the first day he had left.

Three times since then he has been on the point of relating things of a sacred and precious character to certain parties, when he was as immediately checked and prevented by an influence that he has learned to know, thank God, very well. Later on, with the changes of time and people, he found out why the impression and leading were given.

We remember once to have read of a preacher who, wearied with writing and study, had bowed his head over his writing table, when suddenly came an impression almost as vivid as a flash of sheet lightning, "Throw yourself back." Instantly he did it, when with a crash the chimney fell, crushing the table where he had been leaning.

We know a gentleman very well who has ever been a devout man. One morning before day he was suddenly awakened by the Spirit of God with the deep impression upon him like a command, "Get up, dress, and go out on the street."

Immediately he replied aloud to the Lord, as was often his custom: "Lord, if this is your voice I am willing, but what can I do on the street before day?" Again came the impression, "Get up, dress and go out on the street."

Still again he exclaimed, "Lord, I see it is snowing. What could I do for you on the street at such a time?"

At once he began to feel a cloud coming over him, and the Spirit seemed to be withdrawing; whereupon the man sprang up and said, "All right, Lord, I'll go. Don't leave me;" and instantly he felt the smile of God upon his soul.

As he dressed he became still more serene and peaceful in spirit, and when he stepped out on the street and strode down the deserted and snow-covered pavement, he was a happy man. He had trudged some six or eight blocks when he looked up with a smiling face through the falling flakes and said:

"Lord, I don't know what you want me to do; but I am very happy walking around here in the dark for you. If this is what you want, it is all right."

By this time his soul was on fire and a joy unspeakable filled him. He went on several blocks farther, when just as day began to break, he saw a man on the other side of the street with a tin dinner pail in his hand. At once came the inward voice, "Join yourself to him." He did so, and crossing over and stopping the man he found that he was not a Christian. He then told him that God had awakened him and sent him forth that early to meet him and talk with him about the salvation of his soul.

The speaker's own heart was burning with the love of God, and his voice was tender and kind; his eyes overflowed, and God filled his mouth with the right words. So when he asked the man if he would let him pray for him he bowed his head in consent and they both got down in the snow together. Oh, how God's servant prayed, and how the poor sinner wept! When they arose from their knees salvation had come to the man who carried the dinner pail.

The men shook hands and parted forever. The laborer went on to his distant factory, and the merchant returned to his bed, but not to sleep. He held a special service of praise and thanksgiving in his room an hour before the early mass of the Catholics.

In speaking afterwards of the incident, he said he believed that God saw that the man would be killed that day in the factory by some accident, or that his heart was in a ripe state of salvation, so that the case for either reason had to be taken in hand at once; hence

the urgent, repeated call, "Get up, dress and go on the street." The merchant furthermore said: "I have never seen the man since, but I firmly believe I will meet him in heaven."



15. PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS

Some one has said that every man's life is a plan of God. This single thought awakens other reflections. We begin to see that the peculiar temperament has been given, the location of life chosen, one's surroundings ordered, and the divine personal dealings all agree with some definite purpose in the mind of God.

We question whether any thoughtful person has not been repeatedly impressed with the fact that a strange, great power seems to be in his life quietly shaping and overruling in spite of all plans, purposes and efforts of the man himself. The devout soul gets to see that this mysterious agency is God Himself; while the spiritually untaught rails at what he calls fate and the accidents of time.

There is no life in the Bible that appeared more God-overlooked and forsaken than that of Joseph.

And yet, as the history continues, and the years bring in light and explanation, we see that his sale into slavery, the wrongs inflicted upon him in Egypt, the slander which he could not clear up, and the long closed prison door which he could not open, and all, were the very things that under God helped to make him what he became.

If ever a man had his faith tried it was Abraham. Lot got the best part of the country; a part of his domestic life was a torture in the case of Hagar and Ishmael; he was a wanderer for scores of years in the land God gave him; and he died without seeing the divine promise fulfilled. And yet, as we look over the long period of faith testing, and see the outcome in the character of the man whom God called His friend, we see that no mistake was made and divine wisdom ran through it all.

We doubt not that if Joseph or Abraham had the choosing of certain events in their lives, they never would have included the things which happened. And we feel equally assured that none of the Christian readers of this chapter, if they had been allowed in the beginning of their lives to have decided upon the occurrences which have so colored and marked their experiences and affected their characters for good, would ever have asked for them. Rather, they would have prayed to be delivered from them.

Naturally we would not want to see our loved ones die until we had followed more than half of the family circle to the cemetery. Who would care to lose their property and come down to pinching want? Who would suggest to God that great physical pain should visit the body, or that misrepresentations of conduct and life should be circulated, or that friends should become cold and fall away, and yet these are events that come to most if not all of us, and, what is more, are the very things that by the blessing of God become so graciously potent to break up the proud spirit, educate the heart, wean us from the world, and bind us to God.

Truly, if we had the ordering of the events of our lives, we would not be worth the powder that would blow us up. It would be curious to see a person who had never had a care or sorrow, never lost a friend or loved one, knew nothing of anxiety or trouble, had everything he wanted and spent the hours and days flitting about among the flowers of new pleasures and indulgences like a butterfly.

Such persons would find it impossible to sympathize with the sad ones of life, and would

bear in them a mine not only undeveloped but of whose treasures they knew nothing. We have thought what an affliction it would be to be cast for days and weeks in the company of such light, thoughtless, giddy beings. Such people are not those to whom we turn in time of great trial and sorrow; they cannot advise and lead the tortured, bewildered soul; cannot heal the broken heart; and are not only seen to be helpless but feel themselves their inability and incompetency on these very occasions.

Some men and women are remarkable in their ability to help others in the spiritual life. This power did not come accidentally. It was not picked up in a moment on the roadside, or borrowed from another. It came from a long discipline of suffering. Sanctified sorrow did its work. Losses came, but there was left something in its place more valuable than that which was taken away.

Friends fell away, but the heavenly Friend drew nearer. Then there came lessons on the sick couch and by the sick bed. The empty cradle and then later on vacant chairs multiplying in the home made the heart very tender, and heaven very near. The long hours of wakeful nights talking with God and asking Him to adjust the heart and shoulder to the old troubles that had suddenly become heavier, and to accept new ones that had forced themselves in, brought a knowledge and wisdom that are never to be found in colleges and universities.

The teacher of rhetoric and oratory taught the young sophomore how to wave his hand and pitch his voice in his declamation at Commencement. It was well done, but no heart was touched, and there was much suppressed amusement in the audience. But Christ as the sanctifier, comforter and teacher in sorrow and trial will so instruct the soul that there will be gestures of the hand, looks of the eye, and accents of the voice, that aside from words themselves, will bring light, strength, comfort and benediction to multitudes.

It is to be remembered that a statue is not produced by additions, but by a series of removals seen in cutting, chipping, filings and polishings. It was first a block of stone without much shape, but after a great deal of taking away, the beautiful, graceful or majestic figure became a perfect delight to the eye.

In the carrying out of the divine plan in our lives we have been struck with the fact of how much has to be taken from us. Not only sins, but possessions; not only wrong notions, prejudice and ignorance, but friends, cherished plans, and the brightest of hopes. All of us have seen some of whom we would say, if intellectual error was corrected, or that mistaken idea of duty, or that fierce manner, or that manifestation of spiritual pride could be removed, how lovely the character would be.

If men notice these failings and faults, these shortcomings and overstretchings, how much more will God observe them. And His plan is by the cleansing of the blood, the teaching of His Spirit and the dealing of His Providence to deliver in every respect.

There is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the soul of the believer, but after that there are steady removals in the life, not of inbred Sin or sins, but a cutting and clipping, a filing and polishing, an emptying and taking away, an undeceiving, separating and weaning, that is quietly done, yet in the course of time is seen to be simply marvelous as a performance and an effect.

There are many empty bird cages in the divinely led life. The curious puzzles and gaudy colored toys are forgotten in the garret. The sports and pastimes that once so engrossed, have been powerless for years to interest. Sepulchers stretch in a long line away back to the time God met us and gave us true wisdom with everlasting life. What strange names are on those tombs. Some stand for persons and some for things. You now marvel how they could have stood between you and God. But the Lord drew near and stripped away veils, gave deeper insight, touched both them and you, and then they died to you or you

died to them. There were more funerals, other life removals, the tombs increased, the idols were ivy-covered, the earth got smaller, heaven came nearer, and the soul now perfectly convinced and contented with the fact that Christ is all in all, finally awaits joyfully and eagerly the divine summons to the skies.

It is very blessed to observe what comes to the soul in place of the things that are taken away.

Pearls of character are formed from blows given the unresisting heart. The stripe received for truth's sake becomes a badge of honor. The desertion of friends brings in unprecedented divine communion, and a wealth of heavenly sympathy; the fire of trouble burns the cords that bound us; the midnight vigil in suffering awakens a midnight hymn, and the casting into the furnace secures the presence of another whose form is like unto the Son of God.

The Bible speaks of "treasures of darkness." We had to penetrate some very gloomy hours and conditions to find out the meaning of this verse. We came up from great depths of trial with our hands full of gems. The soul became rich with power to understand and help others. We were able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we had been comforted of God. We obtained not only "the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, but the precious things put forth by the moon;" while "darkness showed us worlds by night we never saw by day."



16. GOD'S OVERRULING POWER

We are told that Satan is mighty, but we know that God is almighty. The signs are abundant and unmistakable of divine omnipotence. Stars, oceans, mountains and all proclaim it. The heavens and earth both declare this glory of God.

There is another power of the divine being, seen in the history of the world itself, and beheld in the providential march of events, which impresses the thoughtful as profoundly as the omnipotence in creation, though exerted quietly and in a different way. The very fact of this strange force of God, exerted noiselessly, meeting the free agency of men, and bringing the wild, fierce actions of individuals and nations to results utterly uncalculated, unlooked for, and opposite to what was desired, calls for greater wonder than His creating the universe out of nothing, and hanging it with all its flying, intricate systems, in empty space.

The Bible is filled with this marvelous and most comfortable truth. God is not only able, but does overrule the actions of men and devils for the good and glory of His kingdom. The captivity of His people for seventy years in Babylon, supposed by the enemies of Israel to be a perfect victory, and crushing defeat to them, and regarded by themselves as an unmixed woe, was ordered of God to scatter and spread among their very enemies, and to nations beyond, the same truths He had been revealing to them for centuries.

The sale of Joseph by his brethren into a life of bondage is plainly declared in Holy Writ to have been permitted, and good brought to many out of the cruel transaction.

In like manner we see the hatred of Haman, made to work out the elevation of Mordecai; the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira brings down the divine judgment and a resultant protection to the church; while the persecution of Herod is made by the blessing of God, in the scattering of the apostles, a means of spreading everywhere the glorious Gospel,

and so revival fires sprang up in all directions.

The crucifixion of the Saviour by bad men is made the great act of Redemption. The very fall of man ushers in a scheme of salvation which brings to the soul a whiter, deeper holiness than that possessed by Adam; and the Garden described in the last chapter of Revelation is more beautiful and blessed than the one mentioned in Genesis.

We see this amazing power of God in human history. There is a Man who wears a crown of thorns who does what He will with the kings who have crowns of gold upon their heads. The Bible calls Him the Prince of the kings of the earth. He continually brings good out of evil. He saves His people not only from their enemies, but from their own mistakes and errors. He is adequate for every contingency and happening. The history of the Huguenots and the Puritans is but another confirmation of this silent but omnific energy of God among the nations. Men can do wrong, but God can bring good out of it to His people, and glory to Himself.

When this fact is seen to be true in the individual life, very great indeed is the joy and comfort.

The truth becomes not only a tonic to faith, but a preventive of despair, and a wellspring of gladness itself, when the hands of our enemies have been laid heavily upon us, or we have acted ourselves in a foolish and blundering way.

If we will turn to God, and be true to Him thereafter, He will not only forgive and deliver, but bring blessing and blessedness out of the whole matter. The word is that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.

That God sanctifies sickness and bereavement to our spiritual advantage, many of us have abundant reason to testify. Both of these powerful visitations checked wildness of career, altered mistaken judgments, and transferred our thoughts, affections and treasures to the skies. The heart came near breaking as the vacant chair, empty room and desolate life confronted us, but this same affliction was the beginning with many of a better, and with still others of a holy life.

No one would naturally prefer trouble to come into the heart and home, yet a great multitude of the Bloodwashed can witness to the everlasting benefit brought to the spirit by these mournful histories of the past. Under God's hand it occasioned the severing of cords that bound us to earth, and the destruction of idols that threatened the ruin of the soul.

When this truth we are speaking of comes to be applied to the wrongs inflicted upon us by others, it increases still more in wonder. How can unjust and harsh dealing, how can the words of innuendo and vituperation, the poisonous breath of suspicion, the mud of slander itself, be overruled for good?

Strange as it may appear, the transforming work of God is beheld even here, and not only with the victim, but to the injurer and wronger of his fellow-creature and brother, if he repents and obeys God. To the latter comes a most profitable lesson in the partial or complete loss of divine communion. No matter what has been the spiritual attainment or obtainment, this character judge, critic, and detractor finds to his bitter cost that he cannot go on saying that he loves God, whom he has not seen, and yet loves not and stabs the brother whom he has seen. Vain is the argument that it is because he has seen him that he gives him repeated unkind verbal blows and written stabs. The reply of the Word is: "Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up."

A man who has any sense at all, or any appreciation of the presence and power of God in the heart, will never care to take a second excursion into the realms of unfriendly,

unbrotherly criticism and actual slander. God stood aside and let his foolish servant wander in this dreary country for a while, that he might learn in a never to be forgotten way how sour and bitter are the fruits that grow in that region, and how very far away the sky seems to be to those who visit or dwell in that country.

Everlasting good has come to that individual who will thus be taught of God.

As for the victim himself, we never saw a true child of God go down under such attacks. If he continues to love, and walk humbly and faithfully with his Lord, everything is made to work together for his good. Personal wrongs, unjust treatment, detraction, slander and all that unlovely brood of the thoughtless and bitter tongue, are made marvelous forces of good, to wean from earth, keep the spirit lowly, bring out the virtues of patience and long-suffering, develop faith and love, cause the soul to live in an atmosphere of prayer, and fill the heart with the sweetest consolations of the Holy Ghost.

Nor is this all; we learn by these experiences not to make again the mistake of the kind of Judah in showing all the treasures of Jerusalem or of the heart, to anybody and everybody who comes along. It will not do to throw pearls before all whom you meet. Not every individual recognizes a gem when it is shown. He might think it a grain of corn, and angry at the disappointment turn afterwards and rend you.

Still again, by these experiences we learn that the apostle meant what he said, when, under inspiration, he declared, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." The gospel does not demand of us an instantaneous confidence, and thrusting forward into places of honor and responsibility of every one who comes suddenly into our private life and ecclesiastical circle. On the contrary, it teaches a kind of moral test and probation, in these very words, "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

We have a preacher friend who has a great way of taking a sudden fancy to some new convert or reclaimed backslider, and of thrusting him forward into most prominent places in pulpit and on platform. In every instance, these men have turned upon him, and done him injury in word and deed.

In the Gospel of John are the remarkable words that Jesus did not in a certain place commit Himself to men, "for He knew what was in man."

What He knew through His omniscience, His people have to pick up in scraps through very bitter experiences of human faithlessness and injustice. So it is that our wrongs, if properly received and borne, are made to bring us good, and do us good. We not only grow in grace, but in knowledge. We not only obtain a greater measure of religion, but we get more sense.



17. "BEFORE HIM"

There seems to be many gospels these days. In making of books that claim little short of inspiration and direct revelation there is no lack. False Christs and prophets are numerous. Teachers are on all sides, claiming to have the whole truth, and everything else besides, unless it be that patient, pitiful, humble, unprovokable love commanded by the Bible, and illustrated by the Saviour.

Woe be to the man who does not see and agree with such teachers in all things. I say unto you that it were better that a millstone were hung about his neck and he be cast into the depths of the sea.

Yea, better that he never had been born.

There are various forms of holiness or sanctification advocated, believed in and exemplified. The monastic over against the fleshly; the fanatical and the shallow, the narrow and the broad, the severe and the loose; in a word, many counterfeits as well as misapprehensions of the graces. Some people with hard, unbending lives, Dark Age practices, and the emphasizing of matters not essential to salvation, repel a multitude of honest inquirers. Still others, with a laxness of life, levity of spirit, and an utter absence of prayerfulness, disgust a still greater number of observers.

Of course the true type of holiness is to be found in life. Many are adorning this doctrine of the Bible, though often making mistakes of judgment and general blunders of the head. This true type of godliness will of course be described in the Scripture, and that description and the human light ought to agree.

There are different verbal presentations of the great blessing in the Word. All are lovely and forcible, but one embraced in the two words forming the caption of this chapter is especially striking to the writer. A man filled with the Holy Ghost is talking about a Bible holiness which God had promised with a great vow should be the experience of His people. It was to be a holy life lived "before Him."

Two very impressive facts come out of this brief but remarkable expression. The first is the exalted type of the holiness itself. It was a life lived before or in the presence of God. There can be, and is, a holiness before men, that is not holiness at all. It is possible to deceive men with a profession, and not possess the thing professed. There can be a fair exterior, when inside there is decay and moral rottenness. It is possible to stand up on propositions that we have it all, and yet falsify; to say "saved and sanctified to date," and yet be running on the memory of an experience whose glow and glory and power have long been gone. We have all seen strange things on this line; persons making wrong representations in order to obtain railroad permits and favors; handing a street car conductor a transfer ticket whose time has expired fully an hour; repeating damaging rumors about individuals without being assured of their truth; failure to fulfill promises and obligations, etc.

Over against these kinds of lives was hoisted the stereotyped expression of "fully saved," and "saved to date." Some would say that this would hardly be a holiness before men, as the moral flaws are so evident. The reply is that all do not know these flaws. So the ignorance of the public in regard to these features, and the often repeated testimony, make it a holiness before men which, however, utterly breaks down before God.

That is certainly a beautiful and correct life which can appeal to God's eye and judgment. It was to this that God called Abraham, in the words, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect."

It is evidently one thing to walk before men, and another to walk before God. That is a pure heart and holy life which can look up and say, "Thou God seest me," and be happy in the thought.

The writer has several friends who do much slum and mission work, and have to go down into the vilest places to rescue souls. The great majority of men would not believe they could come in contact with these people and witness such scenes, and yet remain unbesmirched and unhurt. But they walk down there before God, and know the truth as well as the joy of the Bible statement about having wings of burnished silver, though moving in the midst of pots.

There are conditions and circumstances where some who live at a greater distance from God could not see how victory could occur in view of the surroundings and happenings,

and yet Christ has followers who come up unfallen, unwounded and unsoiled.

We heard a preacher say in New England, "I am willing to be photographed any hour of the darkest night on earth." Another said, "God can trust me anywhere." These two utterances were simply paraphrases of the Bible description of a holiness which can live its life before God.

The second fact brought out in the words "Before Him," is that of a wonderful deliverance for the genuinely sanctified man.

Most of us start out to live holiness in a way to please men. It is bound to become a bitter bondage, and affect not only happiness but usefulness itself.

We do not mean to say that we are to despise public opinion, act regardlessly of social law and custom, and ignore observances that have become like commandments on stone, because based on prudence and propriety, and upheld by common sense. A genuine holiness will not act offensively and suicidally in that way. The very correctness of the outward life will be a recommendation of the experience we profess.

Still there is a blessed truth in the thought that we are called to live holily before God.

In the first place it would be very exhausting to be compelled to go around every morning and ask everybody whether we were living to please them or not.

Second, as so many good people have very different standards, it would be impossible to satisfy all if we tried our best. We have excellent people who would distrust our profession if we remain members of some church. They would say we had compromised. Others would doubt us if we wore a necktie. Still others would cast us out of their affection and company if we did not advocate some doctrine they believed in, and yet which was not essential to salvation.

Third, it would seriously cripple our religious work; for the time spent in seeing whether every one of our friends and acquaintances approved us, would be so great that we would not be able to work for God as both He and we would desire.

Fourth, it would be certain to destroy self-respect, and religious character itself. What studying of countenances, what inquiries in the parlor and office, to know whether our ways pleased our relatives, friends, acquaintances, church members and followers, or not. The greater the following, or the social or ecclesiastical circle, the more tremendous the undertaking of finding out whether we met the public demand.

Then how contemptible we would become in their eyes, and also in our own. How exhausted we would be by nightfall with the endless, bitter and fruitless labor.

On the other hand, if one were living to please God, and would simply look to Him on awakening in the morning, or up to Him through the day on the street, in the store, or at the home, with the whisper, "Do I please you, my Saviour?" we would have the instantaneous and delightful smile and voice of the Spirit upon the soul.

A fifth thought is that such is human nature that the more you try to please some people the more exacting they become. They will begin to demand as a right what had first been offered as a compliment. We have seen a husband labor to please his wife, and a wife try to do the same for the husband, and the result in a short time was a domestic tyrant! When certain natures see that you are trying to make brick for them, they will soon exact straw in addition. Then comes the lash of the bond-master, and a strange kind of repetition of Egyptian life again.

A sixth thought is that we will never please more really good people, and have a more successful life and happy heart for ourselves, than when, without any sourness or

bitterness whatever, we give up trying to please men and go to pleasing God in any, every, and all things. The longer we live the more convinced we are that “holiness before God” is the best, truest, safest, happiest and most victorious life this side of heaven.



18. “LITTLE IN THEIR OWN SIGHT”

Surely there is not a more beautiful Christian grace than humility. Its very rarity adds to its preciousness. We get so sick of the fuss and feathers, the swagger and swell of the world, that a meek spirit, a genuinely lowly heart connected with spiritual excellence is as refreshing and delightful to the mind and soul as an oasis with waving palm trees and purling springs is to the exhausted traveler.

When Saul is first beheld in the Old Testament his modesty and humility are more attractive than his imposing height and handsome countenance. He impressed all who met him with this beautiful trait of character. He had to be dragged out of “the stuff” where he had hidden himself when they were after him to make him a king. Samuel referred to this earlier part of his life when he said, “When thou wast little in thine own sight.” It was because of this conscious littleness that God chose him. But later he became puffed up and great in his own eyes, and God set him aside, a mode of procedure which God keeps up to this day. The thing to do is to stay little, if we would continue in God’s hands as instruments of power and good.

Christ says: “We must be converted and become as little children.” After conversion according to this we get little. Truly the converted life and “littleness” are not synonymous in the spiritual realm, as we have seen the two manifested. Let the reader recall that semicircular row of church dignitaries on the platform; or the appearance of some lay brother escorted by an usher up the crowded aisle, if he would grasp what we mean. The strut, swell and appearance of bigness are plainly to be seen in the lives of many who name Christ.

We recall a converted brother who was elected a member of the Legislature of his state. Large before, he now became larger, and bore around with him a look of swollen importance that impressed his old friends with keenest pain. He got to looking over his chin at people, extended one finger in shaking hands, and barely noticed certain individuals and classes. All this time he was a prominent member of the church and, in addition, was a local preacher. He had been converted but had not become a little one.

Many of us can remember when God could not or would not use us because of our felt bigness.

It was a fact conscious to us and evident to others. We were Christians, felt we would be saved if we died, but the Lord did not use us. We were too big.

There are cannon that are hardly ever fired because so large, and the firing is so expensive. Some are called “Disappearing Cannon.” We have seen them in the church. One shot, or one sermon, and we see them no more for a year.

There is a church bell in Moscow that is too big to be rung. We have seen that bell in other places.

As we studied the character we said it would be better to be a dinner bell. The latter is small, it is true, but it does something.

When Gideon prepared his army to go up to battle, the Lord told him he had too many soldiers.

So first twenty-two thousand men were taken from him, and after that nearly ten thousand more, until only 300 were left. There was too much bigness or self-sufficiency as they first appeared, for God to handle them. They would have taken all the credit and glory of the victory to themselves.

They would have thought that it was their bow and spear and prowess that achieved the triumph, and the Lord would not have had the honor.

We read once of a Spanish cavalier stopping at a hostelry at a late hour of the night and calling loudly for the servant and entertainment. The landlord finally woke up and standing sleepily rubbing his eyes in the hall, cried out, "Who is there?" The proud reply of the grandee was, "The Duke of Saltillo, Count of Aleantara, Knight of Avalon and Lord of Ferrara." "Too many of you," was the response of the landlord, who had not looked out of the door, but now relocked it, and went to bed.

"Too many of you" is the trouble today in great union meetings, and "Too much of you" the cause of individual failure in the work of God in still other quarters. God cannot or will not use the proud, self-sufficient man. We have seen him fail a thousand times. He may be propped up with titles, dignities and earthly honors, but it is evident that God does not honor him.

This dreadful fact, which is bound to be beaten into the consciousness of men sooner or later, causes them to adopt union meetings with great flaring external helps. Perhaps the combination will bring success; anyhow if God does not go out with them to battle, and defeat comes, then the shame and mortification of the failure will in a sense be veiled from the public by the fanfare of the trumpets, and the rolling of the ecclesiastical machinery, and the individual will be sheltered from blame by being lost sight of in the crowd.

The same awful fact leads some preachers to engage a sensational evangelist who has a way of covering up spiritual nakedness and making a defeat appear like a victory; and still other ministers to announce that a great meeting is to be held in their church, by certain great men. "No mourners' benches will be used," is the soothing announcement to the public. The writer of that line knows well that there will be no bench for the mourners, because there will be no mourners for the benches.

In still another quarter the statement is made in a large city paper that a protracted meeting is to be held in a certain church; that there will be a revival carried on without any excitement whatever.

The man who penned that notice succeeded in deceiving a number, but not all. There was a time in his ministry when he was little in his own sight, and God used him wonderfully, but he became puffed up, felt sufficient in himself, was duke, count, knight, and lord all in one, felt he was thirty-two thousand, that he was a big one, and then God left him. The shorn Samson knew there would be no displays of divine power in the meeting. He felt in his soul it would be a tame affair, and so anticipated the result by saying there would be no excitement, no feeling, no demonstrativeness in the services.

See the profound wisdom of the published notice. When, after several weeks of dragging along, nothing really was done, no lightnings from heaven flashed from pulpit and about the altar, no spiritual earthquakes shook the consciences and lives of dead church members, no cries for mercy, and shouts of rapture and victory echoed through the air, it would be very easy to say, "We told you this was the kind of meeting we were going to have."

This indeed was just what the preacher said to the reporters and people. He ended the meeting with the Lord's Supper, announced a church fair for the next week, where there was no lack of demonstration and feeling, and dismissed the congregation with a great handshake. A number of uneasy Christians tried to bolster themselves up with loud and repeated sayings to one another, "that it was a fine meeting – a very fine meeting – a real nice meeting – a good, quiet meeting," etc. It was really curious to hear how often they said this, and looked into each other's faces as if they did not believe in their own words and expected to be contradicted.

The preacher himself went home dissatisfied in heart, though his hawhaws had filled the church, and he almost looked bright in the face several times. He tossed a long time on his bed before he fell into a troubled slumber. Once before losing consciousness he thought he heard a voice whisper in the dark, "When thou wast little in thine own sight." Later he dreamed that Christ stood at the foot of his bed with a crown of thorns on his head, and turned upon him a prolonged sorrowful look, and then faded away.

How sweet and blessed it is to be little in one's own sight; willing to be overlooked, slighted, set aside and forgotten.

It is delightful to be in a corner with Jesus. It is blessedness itself to be delivered from big mouthings, big celebrations, big everythings outside of actual grace, and to walk quietly, humbly and meekly with the Lord.

There is no pining for high places. No craving for great honors, or the notice and approval of men.

The soul is not sour, the heart not unsympathetic, and the life not frozen. It is not the hermit existence, but a life full of humility and meekness. The man has not lost self-respect, is not timorous, fearful and cowardly; on the contrary, he has a spirit of strength and courage in his heart; and yet feels little in his own sight.

This is only one of the many paradoxes we find in the spiritual life, and as an experience is not hard to understand when we remember that the man himself in the midst of victories of all kinds in his life realizes that the success and triumph come because God's smile and blessing are upon voice, labor and life. He conquers through God. He is glad and content that it is so. And God continues to honor him.

Such a man quietly disentangles himself from the trappings and false ways of the world. He does not care for glittering shields and swords, when God has specified a sling and stones as the mode of deliverance. He will not be counted in a phalanx made up of a mixed multitude who are to do battle for the Lord. The neighing of the horses brought up from Egypt give him no assuring thrill of coming victory. His heart sinks as he views the preparations made in a great union gospel service, and knowing God as he does, is confident from the start that nothing will be done, though there is a platform full of dignitaries at one end of the vast hall and the best singers in the city engaged to form a choral band that will impress the audience, while two anthems are to be sung in C sharp, and a third is to be rendered by a famous female singer who will reach E in her performance. This is promised to the public; a kind of musical chromo to draw the crowd.

Oh, how God's little ones turn from all these things! They take no delight in ornate rituals, graces of rhetoric and flowers of oratory. The artistically rendered solo fairly sickens the heart. The sight of the stewards marching up the aisles in couples with the collection baskets in hand, is felt to be a reaching backward for forms and ceremonies that had been given up in the mightier and more glorious history of the church.

With all this God's little one is not embittered, and does not propose to leave the church

or the earth because of questionable doings. Confident of God's power to rectify, he remains sweet through all, and tranquilly expectant of better things and holier times.

Such a character is easily approached. He has no starch-like dignity to uphold and no grandeur to preserve. In speech, manner and life he is perfectly simple. He is not childish, but childlike. In pulpit, pew, at home, in the store or on the street, he is always without affectation. The indwelling of Christ in the heart, the constant consciousness of the presence of God in the life, make it impossible to be otherwise.

These little ones of God may be learned or unlettered men, and yet alike they carry with them the conviction that without Christ they are nothing, and so, though walking on different intellectual planes, and moving often in different social circles, yet all can see that they tread alike the path of lowliness. In this genuine, unaffected humility of spirit arises one of the great causes of their power.

It is not alone that God uses only such men with mighty effectiveness, but such a spirit and life in itself strangely appeals to and moves men.

Alas for the world, and alas for the cause of God, and alas for our own souls when we cease to be little in our own sight!

The writer heard his mother say that several such lowly preachers came into her life when she was a girl and that they left an eternal impress upon her. Their gravity, sweetness, gentleness and humility wrought a conviction upon her that she never outgrew. She could not speak of them in after life, when an elderly woman, without her eyes filling with tears. She told us when a child, standing by the side of her rocking-chair, that she could still feel the pressure of their hands upon her head, though they had long been in their graves.

We recall one who in his visits through the country ever seemed fearful of putting a burden on some one. He would be distressed to know that a fowl or animal of any kind had to lose its life to furnish him a meal. He would sit in a cold room uncomplainingly before he would ask for a fire. One morning the lady of the house where he was spending a couple of days saw him at the wood pile gathering a few chips. Intensely mortified at her oversight of her guest's comfort, the good sister begged him to return at once into the house from the cold wind, and she would have his fire built.

But she was not as grieved and pained at her neglect as dear old Brother Clinton, now in heaven, was, that he had been detected in picking up a few splinters and caused some one to have the trouble of making him a fire. Humble to the last he said: "Please don't be worried, sister; I'm not as cold as you think; I just wanted a few chips to warm my feet." The weather was very bitter, and the thermometer low down; but saintly, precious soul as he was, he had drunk in his Master's spirit and felt that he would rather minister unto others than to be ministered to.

We recall still another who used to be an accustomed figure on the streets and roads of a certain Southern state. He went about with a Bible under his arm, and a long staff upon which he leaned, and that came up as high as his head. He not only looked like a prophet, but lived like one, and drank deep of the humble, childlike spirit of his Master.

He spoke to many a man about his soul as he met or overtook the traveler upon the road. Few got over these interviews. Some became angry, but many went away with eyes and hearts full, and not a few were saved.

He would approach a lady as she was tending her flowers in her front yard, and leaning against the fence speak a few words about her soul and Christ and heaven, and leave her in tears and with the promise to give her heart to God. It was found almost impossible to shake off the impression this simple man of God made upon the soul. He felt his

littleness, and the Saviour used him.

One stormy night he opened the door of a hotel in a Southern town, and looked in upon forty or fifty guests, sitting, standing, smoking and talking in the office. All glanced up as he entered and stood silent in the door, with the lightning-riven night as a background. Rapping the end of his stick several times on the floor, he said solemnly:

“Fifty years from tonight and every soul here will be in eternity.”

He never added a single word, but quietly reopening the door vanished in the darkness outside.

One gentleman was so affected by the occurrence that he arose, went to his room upstairs, fell upon his knees, asked God for mercy and pardon, and was soundly converted.

It is wonderful what the Lord will do with a man who is small in his own eyes; and equally amazing how little is accomplished by a man who is self-sufficient and great in his own estimation.

Truly it is better to be little in one’s own eyes, little in the opinion of men, and yet great in the sight of God and to be used by Him, than to be one of the earth’s big ones and completely set aside and ignored by the Almighty. Better to keep lonely and walk humbly with God than to develop spiritual pride again, become lifted up with a sense of one’s own attainments and performances, and reach a place where the Lord cannot and will not use the once useful man.

It is a dreadful thing to stand by the altar and go through all the motions of worship and offer the sacrifice, and call upon God, and then be compelled to admit with the forsaken and unhappy king of Israel, “He answereth me no more.”

May we remain God’s little ones; for it is a little one that shall chase a thousand, and a small one become a strong nation.



35. THE AFTERMATH OF LIFE

In some districts of country, after the harvest or a field of grass has been reaped and gathered, a second crop springs up which is called the aftermath. Sometimes it rivals its predecessor, and even when failing here, is always beautiful and profitable. The sight of bare and yellow looking fields clothed with green again is an attractive spectacle, while the vision of herds and flocks roaming over it and cropping of this later richness appeals to the mind and heart most gratefully in various ways.

There is an aftermath of the day. The sun sets behind the distant hills, and is lost in the gold and purple clouds of the west; but in some countries for a short while, and in others for several hours, a softened light fills the air and falls, in an indescribable glory, upon land and sea. It is the reflection of the day that is over and gone. Some mirror in the west, hanging at a certain angle, brings back a lovely vision of the departing form, and to the heart it seems the aftermath of the day. It is not night, but another day, like and yet unlike its predecessor; in some respects more beautiful, and in others far more powerful.

There is an aftermath of life. Some man or woman dies and is buried in the country graveyard or city cemetery. The flowers are placed upon the mound, the slab or monument is set up at the head of the grave, and we say in our haste that they are gone forever.

But after a little we notice that there was something about them which we could not bury, something which would not remain in the graveyard. We discovered it in an indefinable presence when we returned to the bereaved home. We recognized it in precious memories of the deceased, and realized it in the influence left upon life and character by the words and acts of the now silent sleeper in the cemetery. Being dead, they yet spoke. Their deeds lived after them. The life, like a Nile, had receded, but a deposit had been left that brought spiritual wealth to many. The sun of a faithful life had set, but a reflected glow was left in the home, church and community which was felt with the heart as well as beheld with the eye of even an ordinary observation.

Death does not end all. We live after we die, on earth, though the soul itself has risen to heaven or sunk in hell. The good that men do remains after them and is not interred with their bones. We will have to go to the tomb to find the body or the skeleton, but back to the breathing, thinking, acting world, to find the real man who still exists in the lives of the people he comforted, the falling ones he steadied, the needy he relieved, and the backslidden and lost whom he brought to God.

There are families today where the name of certain beloved ones cannot be mentioned without the eyes filling with tears. This is the aftermath of faithfulness. The dew comes to the eye as we stand left in the gloaming of such a vanished life. The heart roams over, and lies down, and rests and feeds, upon this strange after-crop of present influence, when the scythe of death has gathered that life in, long weary months and years ago.

The sun has set, but the glow is left in the sky. The loved ones are dead and yet they live. They are out on the hillside with many palefaced sleepers, but somehow they have never left home. The portrait on the wall, the chair yonder in the corner, the little trunk in the garret, the tiny shoe or stocking taken out of the old chest and wept over, declare in their peculiar influence over our hearts that the day of their power is not yet over and gone. The sunset has come, but from out of the sunset comes a softened light, a tender glory, a breath from the skies, that compensates in a measure for the loss of the day. The sun of life is gone, but the gloaming is left in sacred remembrances, precious mental associations, and holy influences that at times feel like a strange sweet kind of day in itself.

Sometimes the mightiest work of a soul is accomplished after that spirit has gone into heaven. It is said of Samson that he slew more in his death than he did in his life. It can be said of others that they wrought more after death than before death. The prodigal is brought to God through the memory of a sainted mother. The obdurate husband is broken up and yields to the Saviour over the pulseless body of his wife. The ungodly father is led to Christ through the death of his child.

In these instances of mother, wife and child, we see that the aftermath did more than the first planting; the twilight surpassed the day. And yet it is never to be forgotten that there would have been no aftermath but for the first harvest, and no gloaming if there had been no day.

An evangelist tells of a boy sitting on a doorstep in the twilight and looking upward. He was asked what he was doing, and he replied, "Flying my kite." The gentleman responded, "I don't see any kite."

The boy said, "No, it is too dark now, and the kite is too high up, but just feel the string." Then as the gentleman held the cord a moment the lad said with a smile, "Don't you feel it pull?" There was no question after that, and the man walked away with a sermon in his heart.

The father and mother have gone into the tomb; the wife and child have flitted away from the fireside into heaven; they no longer are seen, but oh how their lives and influences

pull the heart.

The same preacher tells of an infidel father who came home from the funeral of his only child.

Grief-stricken, he entered his lonely and bereft home and flung himself upon his bed with a heart feeling like lead. Exhausted by much watching, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he came to a dark rushing river. On the other shore he saw to his delight his little daughter, who stretched her arms to him and cried, "Come this way, father." He felt even in his dream that she was calling him to heaven, and with the following words strangely sounding in his ears, "He that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved," he, all broken and softened, awoke with tears and prayers, and falling on his knees by his bedside was saved.

The string pulled.

It is said of Elisha that after he had been dead and buried quite awhile, the Moabites threw a dead body in his grave; when the instant that the corpse touched the bones of the prophet, the dead man arose and stood upon his feet.

This remarkable occurrence illustrates the very thought we are presenting, of posthumous influence. The dead Elisha could still quicken people on earth. The grave does not end a man's power for good in this world. A Christian physically dead and gone to dust and ashes has something left in book, article, conversation, spirit, influence and life, which will, through God, be able to electrify and vitalize the spiritually dead and make them leap into salvation.

Thank God for this after-power, this aftermath, this beautiful gloaming of religious influence when our earthly sun has set in the grave.

But that we may bless people after death, we must be a benediction during life. If we would exert an aftermath of spiritual influence while asleep in the tomb, we must first have a harvest of goodness and usefulness on earth. If we would leave a beautiful gloaming behind us when dead, we must see to it that the Sun of Righteousness makes a blessed daytime for us, and in us, and through us while we live.



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