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# FOLLOWING FULLY

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WM. GILMORE

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BY

WM. GILMORE

Author of "The Gospel of the Son of God"



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## Foreword

"FOLLOWING FULLY" is the choice title of this volume, containing select thoughts on a variety of spiritual themes in proper order.

After the infallible Book, comes the Master Subject of the Book, of our hearts, and of our lives. Then in true sequence we have the Commission to Service, the Coming of the Rewarder for Service, and specimen servants, "men of like passions," CALEB, who "FOLLOWED FULLY," and was amply commended, and JONAH, who fled, yet was used to warn and save a city.

Because the author was wise, he has sought out, and set in order each theme, thus making it of use as a devotional reading, as a subject for speakers, or in various other ways. Originality of thought is one of the main features of the studies.

Having heard some of these Messages, we can only say, if they are as refreshing when read as when spoken, both author and purchaser will be fully satisfied, the heart of the believing reader will be warmed, and the ONE who alone is worthy glorified.

HY. PICKERING,  
Editor of *The Witness*.

"My servant Caleb, because he had  
another spirit with him, and hath

**Followed Me Fully,**

him will I bring into the land whereinto  
he went; and his seed shall possess it"  
(Numbers 14. 24).

"Let every man be

**Fully Persuaded**

in his own mind" (Romans 14. 5).

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# Following Fully

AND OTHER SUBJECTS.

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## The Bible Infallible.

IN our Lord's prayer for His disciples, recorded in John 17, He says, "I have given them Thy Word." The Word of God was Christ's gift to these early disciples, and it is His gift to us. But the fact that we have this great gift in the homely form of a little Book which we can take up and put down at will may cause us sometimes to forget what a priceless treasure we possess.

We believe that this Book we call the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible. We have many reasons for our strong confidence in the Scriptures, any one of which might profitably occupy the whole time of our meeting. But instead of confining our attention to one line of proof, we shall give in brief outline five out of the many infallible proofs that the Bible is the Word of God.

### I.—Its Miraculous Preservation.

One of the marks of the divine origin of the Bible is that it has been miraculously preserved to us. God who gave it at the first has watched over it and guarded it through the ages, so that we have it to-day not one

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verse wanting. Some have wanted to shorten it by removing parts which they considered objectionable or unnecessary, others have wanted to lengthen it by adding spurious books. They seem to think they could give us a better Bible than the one God has given us. But man has not succeeded in either taking from or in adding to the Scriptures of truth. Thousands of years ago there were thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, and there are thirty-nine now. Hundreds of years ago there were twenty-seven books in the New Testament, and there are twenty-seven still. This complete preservation of the Bible is the more remarkable when we think of

1. ITS GREAT AGE. Human books soon become obsolete. They are born, boomed, and buried all in a few years. Some publisher has said that there is not one book in a thousand that lives five years, and not more than one in fifty thousand lives a century. But here is a Book, some of it four thousand years old, yet it bears no sign of decay. It has stood the test of time. The storms which have swept other books out of existence have only increased the demand for this one. It is still the best seller. More copies of it are printed than of any other book. It is the only Book in the world that is never off the press. It is being circulated by millions, and that in hundreds of languages. It ought to be our aim to give the whole Bible to the whole

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world, for like the tree that grows by the crystal river, its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Besides, this is certainly the best way of defending the Bible—let it out and it will defend itself. But the preservation of the Bible is more remarkable still when we think of

2. THE PERSECUTIONS IT HAS ENDURED. No other book in the world has had so many enemies; wicked men have opposed it in every possible way. From generation to generation this opposition has been kept alive. Why this continued hostility to the Book of God? Why cannot men let it alone? Because the old serpent, the Devil, is the moving power behind all opposition to the Bible. He has roused against it the vice of earth and the venom of hell. Romanists have burned it, Mohammedans have cursed it, infidels have blasphemed it, critics have twisted it, scientists have misrepresented it, ministers have betrayed it, but the old Book still lives, and will continue to live after all its assailants are dead.

"His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure."

### II.—Fulfilled Prophecy.

A second reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in its fulfilled prophecies. These prophecies predicted events which none could have foreseen but God. No man can fore-

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tell the future. Where is the wise man who can tell us what will be the condition of things in the world, say, twenty years from now? But Jehovah says, "I am God, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done" (Isa. 46. 10). Bible prophecies cannot be accounted for except upon the ground of direct revelation from God. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1. 2). The men who wrote the prophecies had to study them for themselves, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1. 11). The Bible contains a vast number of prophecies which have been fulfilled in every detail. In some cases centuries elapsed between the prediction and the fulfilment, yet all came to pass, because the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. We have only time to mention a few of these prophecies, which may be taken as representative of all. Look at the predictions concerning the overthrow of the ancient cities of Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre. At the time their destruction was foretold these cities were great in population, pomp, and power. Their overthrow seemed as unlikely as the overthrow of London, Paris, or New York does now. But they perished according to the

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Word of the Lord through His servants the prophets.

1. NINEVEH. The walls of Nineveh were sixty miles in compass, one hundred feet high, and fortified by fifteen hundred towers, yet its destruction was so complete that in the second century no trace of it remained. Thus the prophetic words of Nahum have been fulfilled: "I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing stock; and it shall come to pass that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee and say, Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her?" (Nahum 3. 6, 7).

2. BABYLON. Next we have the evidence of Babylon, great Babylon. With its massive walls, its brazen gates, its hanging gardens, its artificial lake, its magnificent temple; it was one of the wonders of the world. But it has long ago become heaps of rubbish, its only inhabitants being wild beasts, while the surrounding country is a vast desert. All this, and much more concerning it, was foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. "Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their folds there; but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures" (Isa. 13. 20-22). "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire." "And Babylon shall become

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heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing without an inhabitant" (Jer. 51. 37-58).

3. TYRE. Add to this the testimony of Tyre, once the greatest commercial city of the world. Its merchants were princes, and its traffickers the honourable of the earth. It is now a bare rock whereon fishers dry their nets. After a siege lasting thirteen years it was captured and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Two and a half centuries later Alexander pulled down what remained of the ruined walls, and cast it into the sea in order to form a causeway whereby to join the mainland with the island on which modern Tyre was built. Thus was fulfilled Ezekiel's peculiar prophecy, "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken it saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 26. 4-5).

4. THE JEWISH PEOPLE. Again, think of the many fulfilled prophecies in connection with the Jewish people. There are still about fifteen millions of Jews scattered among the nations of the earth. They have been persecuted, robbed, imprisoned, but the more they are afflicted the more they multiply and grow. Without prince, sacrifice, or native land they have retained their distinct nationality to this day. Their continued preservation is a perpetual miracle. How can we

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account for it? It is part of God's prophetic plan revealed through His prophets long ago. In Hosea 3. 4 we read, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;" and in Numbers 23. 9, "Lo the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

5. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Then we have the many prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Hundreds of predictions find their fulfilment in Him. "To Him give all the prophets witness." From Paradise to Patmos Christ is the grand theme of Holy Scripture. The wondrous story of His virgin birth, His virtuous life, His vicarious death, and His victorious resurrection might be all told in the language of Moses and the prophets. We have only time to mention six predictions concerning His birth, which were fulfilled in every detail.

When the curse fell upon Adam and Eve a coming Deliverer was promised who should bruise the serpent's head. Further on His descent is predicted, showing that He was to come of the seed of Abraham. Dying Israel foretold that our Lord should spring out of Judah. Isaiah limits His lineage to the House of David, and predicts His virgin birth. Micah adds that this should take place at Bethlehem. The New Testament tells the story how all this was fulfilled, prediction and

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fulfilment fitting each other like lock and key. Fulfilled prophecy proves to any candid mind that the statutes of the Lord are right.

### III.

A third reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in

#### **Its Marvellous Unity.**

Here we have sixty-six books written by about forty different persons.

1. THE WRITERS. The writers differed in social standing and in natural and educational abilities. Among them we find kings, statesmen, judges, poets, philosophers, preachers, poor men, rich men, bond men. They wrote in different places, including the desert of Sinai, the cave of Adullam, the banks of the Chebar, the rivers of Babylon, the prisons of Rome, and the isle that is called Patmos. They wrote at different times covering nearly sixteen centuries. The first writer was dead nearly fifteen hundred years before the last one was born. Most of them were strangers to each other. They had no opportunity of consulting with one another or arranging to write a connected book. But though sundered far by distance and time their writings are in unbroken agreement. The Book is one. This great fact cannot be accounted for except upon the ground that one great mind, the mind of

## THE BIBLE INFALLIBLE.

God devised the whole. The whole Bible is an organic unity. Like a tree, or a body, it is governed by the principle of life. Each and every part is essential to the whole.

2. THE OLD TESTAMENT. The Old Testament is necessary to the New. Even the last three chapters of the New Testament cannot be understood without a knowledge of the first three chapters of the Old Testament. The book of Revelation cannot be understood without the book of Daniel; Hebrews cannot be understood without Leviticus. As Girdlestone truly says, "There is not an isolated book in the whole collection, even that strange little book, the Song of Solomon, has threads of connection with other books. So has the prophecy of Obadiah, though it contains only one short chapter." The unity of the Bible is further seen in the way the various writers quote from, and endorse, the writings of each other. Take for example the book of Nehemiah, one of the latest in the Old Testament. It quotes from, or alludes to, several of the earlier books including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Daniel, Zechariah, Chronicles, and Ezra. In the ninth chapter we have a wonderful prayer recorded in which reference is made to Creation, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the giving of the law, the manna, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and fire, the forty years wandering, the multiplication of Israel as the stars, the

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entrance into Caanan, and other historical incidents. Thus we find a great part of the Old Testament endorsed in the book of Nehemiah alone. The book of Zechariah abounds in quotations from the former prophets. We might give illustrations from other books, but these are sufficient to show that the books of the Old Testament are linked together in a unity which cannot be severed.

3. THE NEW TESTAMENT. Turning to the New Testament we find that it has its roots in the Old and cannot be torn away from it. If all Old Testament quotations and allusions were removed from it there would not be much of a New Testament left. In the Gospel of Matthew alone there are over one hundred quotations. In Hebrews there are so many that if they were all cut out it is said there would only be left what would make three chapters. The New Testament then endorses the Old. The New Testament writers also endorse the writings of each other. We have only time to give two illustrations of this. In 1 Timothy 5. 18 we read: "The Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his hire." The earlier part of this quotation is from Deuteronomy, while the latter part is from Luke's Gospel. The apostle quotes the two together as being equally Scripture. Again, in 2 Peter 3. 15, 16 Peter refers to his "Beloved brother Paul," and to

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"all his epistles," and places them on a level with "the other Scriptures." Thus the Old Testament and the New Testament must stand together, for the Lord Himself said, "The Scripture cannot be broken."

### IV.

A fourth reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is that

#### **It Claims to be Infallible.**

1. THE CLAIMS OF THE BIBLE. About three thousand times throughout the Scriptures we find such phrases as "The Lord spake," "God said," "The Lord commanded," "The Word of the Lord came," "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue." These quotations from the Old Testament prove that the writers claimed to have received a Divine revelation. The same is true of the New Testament also. The presence and power of the inspiring Spirit is claimed throughout. In John 14 we read concerning the Spirit's mission, "He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you;" and in chapter 16, "He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." These declarations solve such questions as "How could the disciples remember Christ's addresses or give

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in detail His interviews with sinners?" The Holy Spirit was their unfailing remembrancer. They also solve the problem how the New Testament writers were able to tell us of the last days, the rise and fall of the Man of sin, the Coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the future state. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. The Holy Spirit is the author of Holy Scripture, but He used men as the instruments of His revelation. The Word of God has come to us through human personality. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We do not profess to know just how the Spirit operated on the minds of the writers to produce the Holy Scriptures. Neither do we profess to know just how the Spirit operates on the human heart to produce conversion. His mode of working may be beyond our knowledge, but the effects of His working are clearly seen. The Bible has proved itself both infallible and indestructible. How is this fact to be accounted for except upon the ground that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God?" It is God breathed. The life of God is in it. This inspiration of Scripture includes every part of it.

2. EVERY PART OF SCRIPTURE INSPIRED. Every book, from Genesis to Revelation, its histories, prophecies, types, narratives, miracles, parables, proverbs, are all inspired of God. It includes the record of the sinful

## THE BIBLE INFALLIBLE.

words and deeds of men and of Satan. The Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded all such things for our instruction and warning. The record of them is therefore part of the Word of God. It includes the form as well as the substance, the words as well as the thoughts. To deny that the words are inspired is to deny the inspiration of the Bible altogether. "Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body." The prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, so man could not have been at liberty in the selection of words. The writers themselves believed the words to be inspired. Paul definitely claims inspiration both for his message and for the words in which it was expressed, "which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The inspiration of words is further proved in the way the writers used the Scriptures. For example, in Hebrews 12 we find an argument based on a phrase "yet once more." In Hebrews 2 a similar argument is based on a word, the word "one." In Galatians 3 an argument is based on a letter "seed," not "seeds."

3. OUR LORD AND THE SCRIPTURES. Then our blessed Lord Himself teaches that the Scriptures are inspired as to their words. In the Sermon on the Mount He said, "Verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass

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from the law till all be fulfilled." The jot (the *yod*) is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the tittle is only part of a letter, therefore no stronger words could be used to affirm the inspiration of the Scriptures in every part as originally given. Then look at Christ's method of quoting them. He did not say, "It is implied," "It is thought," "It is suggested." He said, "It is written." Consider also the place the Scriptures had in His own life. To Him they were the bread of life. It was with special reference to Himself He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again, when in conflict with Satan in the wilderness, He defeated the tempter by words quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. Further, when in controversy with the scribes and Pharisees, the Scriptures were to Him the last word. He said, "Have ye not read," "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Again, in the hour of crisis, when He looked death in the face, the thoughts of His heart were expressed in words chosen from the Scriptures. Then after His resurrection, when teaching His disciples, He made the Scriptures the basis of His instruction. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Our Lord's attitude to the Scriptures was always that of devout reverence and unreserved confidence.

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What the Scriptures were to Him, that they must ever be to us. We are safe in following His example. If it must be Christ or the critics, we shall continue to trust Christ. We cannot accept any theory of inspiration which attributes mistakes to Him or gives us a mutilated Bible. The whole Word of God is our heritage, and we shall keep it. The Bible alone must be our final authority, and not the ever changing opinions of men. We cannot follow the wandering stars of modernism, but, God helping us, we shall continue to steer by the fixed light of His inspired Word till we anchor in the haven of eternal rest.

### V.—Its Wonderful Power.

A fifth reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in its wonderful power.

It is not a dead letter. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word *discerner* means *critic*. In these days we have critics and higher critics, but the Bible is still the highest critic. When a man submits his mind to the Word of God he soon feels its power. In this way any honest seeker after truth can prove for himself that the Bible is God's Word. Jesus said, "If any man shall do His will he shall know of the

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doctrine whether it be of God." Many have honestly tried this test, and it has never failed. This is better than being occupied with infidel objections which have all been answered and refuted long ago. There are difficulties in the Bible, as there are difficulties in nature. But, as Tregelles said, "No difficulty in connection with a proved fact can invalidate the fact itself." When we have decided upon the ground of proper evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, then every difficulty must be judged in the light of that fact. Put the Bible to the test by believing it. The final test of its trustworthiness lies in the soul's experience of its teaching and its power. There is an experience of the soul so real that nothing can gainsay it. When the healed man in John 9 said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," all the Pharisees in Jerusalem could not argue him out of that fact. We know that the Bible is the Word of God as surely as we know that the sun shines. In many ways we have felt its power.

1. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SAVING POWER. This is one of the qualities which inspiration imparts to it. Paul speaks of the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. We have no doubt that the Bible possesses this quality. We have proved in our own experience that it does what it

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claims to be able to do. We have been born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. It matters little who we heard speaking it, or in what book we read it. It was not man's word, but the Word of God itself which brought us to the knowledge of salvation. We have also seen it verified in the experience of others. We have seen men and women delivered from sins' tyranny and power, and filled with joy and peace through believing the Word of God.

2. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SATISFYING POWER. Other books grow stale and cease to interest us, but the Bible never loses its freshness. Chapman said, "The Bible is always a new Book to the man who knows it best." Its unfathomable depth proves that it came from God. However deep we go, there are always deeper depths beneath. To understand it we need the power and illumination of the Spirit who gave it. But Bible study in fellowship with God is a real joy and satisfaction to the soul. We can truly say, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Let us read it more carefully, believe it more intensely, obey it more fully, preach it more faithfully, and it will satisfy our longings as nothing else can do.

3. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SUSTAINING POWER. In times of trouble it has cheered us. We have come to it when sorrow

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has cast its gloom over us, and found in it the comfort we needed. In times of depression it has restored us. We have come to it when enemies have assailed and friends have betrayed, and found in it a balm for every wound. In times of trial it has preserved us. We have come to it when temptations fierce and strong have crossed our pathway, and found through it the power to overcome. In times of discouragement it has strengthened us. We have come to it when cast down because of the way, and found in it the cordial for a fainting heart. We might go on to mention many other ways in which the Word of God has been our support along life's thorny road. Having this experience of the truth and power of the Bible, nothing can shake our confidence in it as the very Word of God.

## **“Behold the Man.”**

### **The Virgin Birth and Sinless Humanity of Christ.**

Read Luke 1. 1-4.<sup>1</sup>

LUKE'S object in writing his gospel was to help his friend Theophilus in the things that bound them together: "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." The key-phrase of this gospel is the title "Son of Man." It is used about twenty-six times and always by the Lord of Himself. It means that He was the Representative, the Ideal, the Model Man—the One who always and everywhere did the will of God. I would call attention to seven things which we learn from this gospel concerning the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is an inspired treatise on "Christ, His Virgin Birth and Sinless Humanity."

We learn that

#### **I.—He Was a Real Man.**

Luke gives a detailed account of His mother, His birth, His infancy, His boyhood, and His kindred according to the flesh. In the wisdom of God He has given us, by the pen of a Christian physician, the details we need to know of the great mystery which lies at the foundation of Christianity.

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1. The virgin birth of Christ was *foretold* by *prophets*. These holy men of old knew by the Spirit's inspiration the facts connected with that wondrous event. Adam knew of His humanity, Abraham of His nation, Jacob of His tribe, Isaiah of His family, Micah of His town, Daniel of His time. Then the angel knew His day, and the star in the East led to the spot where all was fulfilled.

2. It was heralded by the angel Gabriel. In the case of John the Baptist the announcement of his birth was made to Zacharias, his father, but in the case of Christ's birth the announcement was made to Mary, because He had no human father. No law of human generation can account for the birth of Christ; it was supernatural, it was miraculous—as much a miracle as was His resurrection. The angel's announcement was, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." It was necessary that He who was to be the Saviour should be born of a woman. Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also must take part of the same. It was also necessary that He should be free from the mortality and sin which passes down to all who are born of the will of man. Both requirements are met in the supernatural birth of Christ. We know the objections raised against this doctrine of

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the virgin birth, but we reject them as the reasonings of unbelief. The doctrine is a Scriptural one, and therefore fundamental to the Christian faith. We believe the Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God, and so we must believe the story of the virgin birth. It is not an open question, as some say; for us the question is closed by the plain testimony of God's Word.

3. The virgin birth was celebrated in songs. Infidelity has no songs, Christianity has no end of songs. We have five in connection with the birth of Christ. The singers were all believers in the doctrine of the virgin birth. It was an event of great joy, and that joy found expression in these bursts of inspired song.

(1) We have the song of the annunciation by the angel, already referred to.

(2) We have the song of Mary, in which her soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour. What a joyful song it is, showing how fully she believed the good news.

(3) We have the song of Zacharias. When he heard of the coming birth of his son he was unbelieving, and asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" Only five words spoken unadvisedly, but for them he was sent into silence for forty weeks. When his speech was restored he employed it in praise and in song. Eastern fathers, and especially Jewish fathers, sang at the birth of their children. So

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Zacharias sang when John was born, but there is no record of Joseph singing when Christ was born.

(4) We have the song of the angels. When the time for Christ's birth came God put the world in motion to bring Mary to Bethlehem. The means used was the decree of Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. When He was born all Heaven was interested in the great event, and an angel came down to announce to the shepherds the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Note the titles here used: Saviour, Christ, Lord. He was the Saviour, the One who was to save from sin and all its consequences. Luke's gospel shows what a Saviour. "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!" He was Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah, the One in whom the types and predictions of the Old Testament were all fulfilled. He was Lord, the One having all authority. The true spirit of this is given in "Handel's Messiah," the word *Lord* being rolled out in thunderous triumph. And if we get into the spirit of it we shall seek to crown Him Lord of all. Then, suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men." Heaven's King came to save, and it was fitting that Heaven's choir

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came to sing. We have seen pictures illustrating this scene in which the angels are represented as hovering above the shepherds. But we believe the angels were with the shepherds. The good news was for all people, and the shepherds were the representatives of the people, so the heavenly host came right down to where they were. The scene is a typical one. The birth of Christ brought glory to God and peace to men. Very few heard that song of the heavenly host, but multitudes have caught the echo of it and rejoiced.

(5) We have the song of Simeon, sometimes called his "Swan Song": "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." This is one of the most striking scenes in the whole gospel. The old man takes the Infant in his arms, and says, "Now, after all the years of waiting for the consolation of Israel. Now, Thy servant may depart in peace." It was not a request that he might depart, but a recognition of the appointed token that his days were drawing to an end. There was nothing more to wait for; his heart was satisfied with Christ, and he was ready to depart whatever time the call came. Each of these songs is worthy of special study. Luke is the first hymnologist of New Testament times. His gospel begins with praise, it ends with praise, and the note of praise is

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of frequent recurrence throughout the whole book.

### II.—He Was a Perfect Man,

the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth. He was perfect in all His ways,

“There only can the Spirit trace  
A perfect life below.”

His perfection was attested (1) by the Father at His baptism. As He came up out of the waters the Spirit descended from Heaven like a dove and abode upon Him. The dove was the symbol of meekness, gentleness, faithfulness, purity, and peace. All these were found in perfection in the Son of God, and so the Holy Spirit could rest there. The coming of the Spirit in this manner was the Father's public approbation of Jesus. It was accompanied by a voice from the opened heavens, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The same witness was borne at His birth, His baptism, and His transfiguration. Thus the Father approved of His person, His service, and His rule. From beginning to end of His earthly life He did always the things that pleased the Father.

(2) But the perfect One was attacked by Satan. He was a real Man, and so could be tempted. But He was a sinless Man, and so no temptation could arise from within; it must be presented from without. Satan's temptation was threefold. *First*, there was a temptation to distrust God: “Command this

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stone that it be made bread." It was an appeal to His physical need, and to yield to it would have been to cast off the human conditions He had taken for our sakes. Satan had tried the same bait before on the first Adam and succeeded. Adam yielded and fell. But Christ did not yield, and so He overcame the tempter. To Satan He answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God." Thus He put honour upon the sword of the Spirit and taught us how to wield it. *Second*, there was a temptation to grasp the Kingdom by false means: "If Thou wilt worship me, all shall be Thine." It was an appeal to ambition—to the desires of the mind. But He would not accept the Kingdom at Satan's hands. He would wait for it until the time appointed of the Father. Again He gave His refusal in words chosen from the Scriptures. So it is always safe for us to overcome temptation by the words which cannot lie. *Third*, there was a temptation to tempt God to see if He would keep His promise. "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." It was an appeal to the affections of the soul. God had not told Him to cast Himself down, therefore to do it would not have been faith but self-will, and He had come to do His Father's will. We trust God when we look to Him to deliver us in paths which He has marked out for us. But we only tempt Him when we

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expect Him to save us in ways of our own choosing. Again the tempter was defeated by words drawn from the book of Deuteronomy. The three answers by which Jesus overcame give the mottoes by which we, too, shall conquer. Trust God, worship God, do not tempt God.

### III.—He Was a Dependent Man.

This is seen (1) in temporal things. As a Man He had nothing He could call His own. He never used His miraculous power for the supply of His own need. "For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." He was indebted to others for the stable in which He was born for the manger in which He was cradled, for the penny from which He taught a lesson, for the boat in which He rested, for the ass on which He rode, for the winding sheet in which He was wrapped in death, for the spices which embalmed Him, and for the grave in which He lay.

(2) It is also seen in things spiritual. We see it in His constant use of the Scriptures. Truly He did not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God. This should make the Scriptures of the Old Testament exceedingly precious to us; it is the Book in which our Lord meditated day and night. In the synagogue at Nazareth He read the Scriptures before preaching. If any one could do with-

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out opening the Book surely He could, but in this as in other things He left us an example that we should follow His steps. Note how He referred to the stories of Elijah, and the widow of Sarepta, and the cleansing of Naaman, the Syrian; thus stamping these records with the seal of His approval and at the same time teaching us how to use them for spiritual instruction and help. Again, we see Him as the dependent One in (3) His habits of prayer. He prayed early and late, and sometimes He continued all night in prayer to God. Where the other gospels are silent about it, Luke repeatedly adds, "He was praying." As the Man Christ Jesus He was continually exercising this grace of true dependence. He prayed at His baptism, after cleansing the leper, before calling the twelve, before the transfiguration, in the Garden of Gethsemane, for Simon Peter, also for His murderers, and His last breath was a prayer. Prayer was His refreshment after toil; prayer was His preparation for important steps in His life. By prayer He prepared for the sorrows which awaited Him. He lived by faith, and His constant prayerfulness declares, "I will put my trust in Him." In this He is our Pattern. What Christ needed we cannot afford to neglect. None of us are so holy that we can afford to do without the hour of prayer. The man who is too busy to pray is busier than God means him to be.

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What a busy life Christ had, but He always found time to pray. Because Luke is the gospel of our Lord's manhood, we find Him always pointing us to the kneeling Christ. May we all, like the disciples, say: "Lord, teach us to pray."

### IV.—He Was a Gracious Man.

"Sinners gathered round Him,  
Lepers sought His face;  
None too vile or loathsome  
For a Saviour's grace."

1. Luke's gospel has a universal character. The good tidings are to "all people." "All flesh" is to see the salvation of God. The Gospel is to be preached in "other cities also." Repentance and remission of sins is to be preached "among all nations," beginning at Jerusalem. In Matthew the twelve are warned to "go not into the way of the Gentiles," but Luke speaks of the seventy going everywhere. It is in Luke the present dispensation of grace is called "the times of the Gentiles." Luke alone speaks of Jesus as Saviour, and of the blessing which He gives as salvation.

2. Again, we see the gracious One in the parables peculiar to Luke: "The Two Debtors," "The Good Samaritan," "The Great Supper," "The Prodigal Son," "The Pharisee and the Publican." Surely these are some of the sweetest stories of grace ever written.

3. Again, we see the gracious One in the

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characters that came to Him in this gospel: "The woman which was a sinner," "Mary Magdalene," "Zacchaeus, the publican," and "The dying thief." Truly, "this Man receiveth sinners." He is the Friend of the poor and the outcast.

"Oh, that the world would taste and see  
The riches of His grace.  
The arms of love which compass me  
Would all mankind embrace."

### V.—He Was a Sympathetic Man.

It would be a study in itself to note the many words and deeds of sympathy bestowed on those who needed them. But we see His love and sympathy specially in the prominent place given to women in this gospel. It is eminently the gospel of womanhood. Five widows get honourable mention in it.

1. Anna, the first prophetess, or missionary, as she has been called. She worshipped in the temple. She spoke of Christ and was a witness to all.

2. The widow of Sarepta, who sustained God's prophet in a time of famine. She got a great blessing for her hospitality at the time, and here the Lord remembers her service after all the years that had elapsed.

3. The widow of Nain, who had her son restored to life again. How tenderly and sympathetically He dealt with her, bidding her weep not. But more than words were needed to stay her grief, so He halted the

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funeral procession and gave her back her son from the dead. A little picture of what He will do on a greater scale when He comes in resurrection power and glory.

4. The importunate widow who kept on asking until she got what she wanted. Some people pray all right, but they give up too soon. Like naughty boys who knock and run away because they don't want anything.

5. The widow who gave the two mites. The sympathising Jesus took notice of her gift. It was well pleasing to Him because it was her all. So the Lord still measures our giving by what we have left. Luke records several other incidents in our Lord's life in which women play a prominent part.

6. Three are specially noted who ministered to Him of their substance, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. They will be remembered for ever by that one sentence which tells of their service to their Lord. As another has said: "He accepted their ministry and help, knowing well the joy to a woman's heart of self-sacrifice and devotion. He understands their nervousness, their loneliness, and household worries, and sympathises with them in the utmost tenderness and grace, and deals with their needs in His mighty power."

7. He defended a sinful woman against her accuser, saying, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." He confirmed Mary in the

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part she had chosen, and pointed Martha to the better way. On the way to the Cross He paused to speak to the daughters of Jerusalem. He made the faithful women who had followed Him to the Cross the first heralds of His resurrection.

### VI.—He Was a Submissive Man.

1. See Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the deepest depths of His sorrow is disclosed. "Being in an agony, His sweat was as it were great drops of blood." The keenest pains of anticipation were felt by Him, yet His will never wavered. His prayer should be the pattern for us all in our darkest days and sorest trials. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." Judas betrayed Him, Pilate sent Him to the Cross, the mob cried, "Away with Him," yet we find in Him no anger, no complaint, no cry of pain. He was the silent sufferer.

2. Luke's narrative of the crucifixion is grouped around three of Christ's sayings on the Cross. (1) "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (2) "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." (3) "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

The first of these sayings sets Christ forth as the faithful Friend of sinners. It is found in the very centre of the paragraph

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which records the cruel conduct of soldiers and rulers. But the dying Saviour prayed for His enemies. In the second saying, Christ is revealed as having the keys of the invisible world. His promise to the penitent thief shows that the companionship begun on the Cross was to be continued in the glory. The third saying shows Him as the One who can transform death into a peaceful surrender to the Father's hands. There was no physical necessity that He should die. But as the submissive One He willingly laid down His life for His own.

"His love to the utmost was tried,  
But firmly endured as a Rock."

### VII.—He Was and Is a Glorified Man.

1. God raised Him from the dead. No fact in history is better attested than His resurrection. Luke gives many infallible proofs that the same Jesus who died on the Cross rose again. In resurrection He appeared to His disciples. At first they were incredulous, and supposed they had seen a spirit. This is the third supposition concerning Him which Luke mentions. The first was that of the family circle. They supposed Him to have been in the company, but He was not in the company; He was about His Father's business.

The second was the world's supposition, "Being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph." But He was not the son of Joseph, He was the

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Son of God. The third was the supposition of the disciples, "They supposed they had seen a spirit." But He was not a spirit, He was a real Man, in resurrection as before it. When He appeared to them in the upper room the first token that it was Jesus Himself was His speech; thus they had the evidence of hearing. He had tones of voice and forms of speech peculiar to Himself, and by these they must have recognised Him. His words, "Peace be unto you," must have called to mind the cheering words with which He closed His last address: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." When He said, "Why are ye troubled?" wouldn't they think of that question on the Sea of Galilee, "Why are ye fearful, ye of little faith?" The second token that it was Jesus was His appearance, thus they had the evidence of sight: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." Wouldn't they know Him by the print of the nails? Then they saw Him eating, so He had not put on an appearance as angels do when they visit the sons of men. The third token that it was Jesus was that of touch, thus they had the evidence of feeling. He said, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." So He had not assumed a phantom body. There was bone in it as well as flesh; it was as substantial, as real, as ever. Thus He established His identity

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and the reality of His existence as a man.

2. A word in closing about the ascension, which is the completion of His resurrection. Luke gives the ascension in the aspect of a farewell. "He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven." So His last act was to bless His followers, and in the attitude of benediction He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven. He came miraculously into the world, so miraculously He passed away from it. No whirlwind or chariot accompanied Him, as in the case of Elijah. He did not need them. He went up where He was before, to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He is there to-day, appearing in the presence of God for us. We hope soon to be with Him where He is, and we shall know Him by the print of the nails in His hands.

## The World-Wide Commission.

Luke 24. 46-49.

THESE are among the last words spoken by our blessed Lord before His ascension. May they sink into our hearts. He had hinted at the closing of the old familiar intercourse in the words, "While I was yet with you" (v. 44). Now He goes on to outline the work of His disciples in the future period of His absence. He gives directions for the evangelization of the world, and these are as really binding on all Christians in this day as on the little group of disciples to whom they were first addressed. The responsibility of carrying out the great commission passes on from generation to generation. The atoning death and triumphant resurrection of Christ make the preaching of repentance and forgiveness possible. Without His death and resurrection we would have no Gospel to preach, but having these grand facts we are responsible to spread the joyful news wherever man is found. May we all feel our responsibility to have some share in this great business.

We shall now look at three things suggested by this text: "The Missionary," "The Message," "The Multitudes."

### I.—The Missionary.

In one sense all Christians are, or ought to

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be, missionaries, but some are singled out for special service and give themselves to the ministry of the Gospel. But this special service needs a special call. All God's servants mentioned in Scripture were divinely called and sustained in their service. Perhaps some of the young people here to-night may hear the call to carry the Gospel beyond the seas; if so, may you have grace to obey. The mission field affords inspiring work for godly young men and young women. But man has no power to call or to send. Only the Lord of the harvest can send forth labourers into the great harvest field. Only His voice has the right to command. Now note a few things about these early missionaries.

1. They went in the Lord's Name. "For His Name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7). They went on His behalf as sent by Him. They could have said, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5. 20). They found His Name sufficient authority for their mission. It is sufficient still. The true missionary needs no other. In that Name lie all the forces that are needed for the guidance and impulses of life. That Name inspires to heroic deeds. No other name could call forth the heroism and self-sacrifice required for *real* missionary work. Barnabas and

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Paul are spoken of as men who have hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15. 26). His Name is above every name, and will outlast them all. We sometimes sing, "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds," but it is much more than a sweet sound—it implies qualities and characteristics, it describes who and what Christ is. It proclaims Him as we know Him in the perfection of His life, in the power of His resurrection, in the glory of His ascension, in the certainty of His coming again.

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of all."

2. These early pioneer missionaries went forth in the power of the Spirit. They had a tremendous work before them to evangelise the world and to combat the forces of evil which were against them. In themselves they were not sufficient for these things, but they were made strong by the power of the Holy Spirit. How did they obtain it? They were told to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, and they did tarry in expectant prayer from the time of our Lord's ascension until the day of Pentecost, and power came in connection with the promised gift of the Spirit. Then the Gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, and multitudes were

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turned to the Lord. Can we have this power in these days? Yes, if we comply with the conditions. First, we must have times of prayerful waiting upon God, as these early workers had. They waited for the coming of the Spirit, and He came as an abiding gift. We do not now wait for His coming. He *has* come once for all. He comes to every believer once for all, sealing, baptising, and indwelling, but we sometimes have to wait for His fulness. In the epistle to the Ephesians we have the injunction, "Be filled with the Spirit." What does it mean to be Spirit filled? We speak of an individual filling a house when he makes his presence and influence felt everywhere. So the Holy Spirit must have complete control of our being. In apostolic times, when men were wanted for special work, the requisites were that they should be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom. It was not sufficient for them to be earnest men, diligent men; they must be personally full of the Holy Ghost. This is the great and urgent need of these weak but boastful days. Nothing else can fit us for the Master's use. Without spiritual power, eloquence, learning, and all else are but as sounding brass and a tinkling symbol. Again, if we are to have fulness of power we must be faithful in carrying out the great commission. Power is promised only to those who work on Scriptural lines,

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and according to the heavenly programme. Even our methods of work must be decided by the Word of God. We have no authority to alter the arrangements of Christ and adopt popular methods in exchange for Scriptural order. God is freed from any responsibility to bless our efforts if we run otherwise than in the way of His commandments. King David tried to bring up the ark on a new cart, but the attempt ended in failure and disaster (2 Sam. 6). There was no failure through lack of numbers, the crowd was with him, 30,000 strong. There was no failure so far as music was concerned, they sang and played on all kinds of instruments of music. But it was all an affair of trumpeting and singing, and nothing in it, like many a present-day effort to get up a revival. David found out the cause of his failure and confessed it: "We sought Him not after the due order" (1 Chron. 15. 13). There was a *due order* for the carrying of the ark by the priests; that was the Scriptural way, but David took the Philistine way, and set it on a new cart. Perhaps he thought it would be easier and faster and more like how others do things. Bringing up the ark was a good thing, but it was a good thing done in a wrong way. The old ark on a new cart was the right thing in a wrong place. Brethren, have nothing to do with new carts, but do God's work in God's way, and be satisfied to wait for His "Well done, thou good and

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*faithful* servant." The Acts of the Apostles shows that the apostolic band worked according to pattern. They kept close to the Scriptures in their preaching, and declared the whole counsel of God. Hence they had spiritual power, power in prayer and power in preaching. They had also moral power. The Spirit of God gave them those qualities needed for their great work, courage, confidence, love, earnestness, patience, and perseverance.

Further, to have the fulness of the Spirit we must be prepared to put away all that grieves Him: selfishness, hypocrisy, malice, envy, jealousy, sin. Our influence over other souls will depend on the state of our own. Two ships received the S.O.S. call of the "Titanic," the "Carpathia" and the "California." The "California," though the nearer of the two, never moved. At the inquiry held in London, Marconi was asked why the "California" never moved; his reply was, "Because she had got packed away in ice, and so her fires were banked and her engines stopped." The "Carpathia" had the honour of saving eight hundred souls. May we be in a condition of soul both to hear and to respond to the S.O.S. of the perishing all around us! We may take Philip as an example of a man in this state of soul, and so under the control and guidance of the Spirit that God could use him. He was called to leave a successful work in Samaria and go

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after one sheep that was lost, and he promptly obeyed. The Spirit directed Him to the Ethiopian eunuch, who was just then reading the Word of God. The meeting of these two men on the desert road shows that an unseen hand had moved each on his own line and brought them together at the right place and time. Thus divine guidance and human work operated together for the salvation of that one soul (Acts 8. 26-40).

3. These first disciples went forth as witnesses: "Ye are My witnesses." The same note is struck again in Acts 1. 8: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." They were witnesses in a special sense. They had seen Christ in the flesh, and could testify to the fact of His resurrection. But there is a department of testimony which belongs to each one of us—we can all witness to Him by our lives. Every true Christian should be a witness for His Lord and Master. He expects all who believe on Him to be His representatives among men. The Spirit's aim is to glorify Christ, and our aim must coincide with His if we would be true and faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus. Then there is the witness of personal experience. That is a form of service which any and every Christian can put forth. It does not take gifts of eloquence or learning for a man to say, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law

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and the prophets did write." We can all say, "Come and hear, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." But witnessing is also preaching the Gospel. Repentance and remission of sins *should be preached*. Preaching is the appointed means by which it has pleased God to save them that believe. It is God's way of displaying His power, both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of saints. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Thousands can bless God that they ever listened to the preached Word, for then God met with them. What God has so highly honoured should not be lightly esteemed by us. We should earnestly seek for greater efficiency in this great work. We sometimes think of Apollos as a good model for young preachers. The greater part of the Acts is taken up with the labours of Peter and Paul, but there is one little corner marked off to be a record of Apollos (Acts 18. 24-28). Note these seven things about him: (1) He was an eloquent man. There may be a difference of opinion as to what eloquence is. Some have defined it as "great skill in the art of public speaking." If this definition is correct, most of us will have to confess that we are not eloquent. But there is another definition, which is more to our liking. "Eloquence is speaking out from the heart." Eloquence is earnestness. When a man speaks in earnest he is eloquent,

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though he may be slow of speech. He feels the force and importance of his message; his whole being is stirred, and this makes him eloquent. (2) He was mighty in the Scriptures, He knew his Bible. This was one form of ability in which Apollos abounded. We might all acquire more of it if we studied our Bibles more. When the Word of God dwells richly in a man his speech drops fatness. If we have the Bible in our hearts and at our finger ends we shall help many by our instructive ministry. (3) He was fervent in spirit. He was a warm-hearted man, a burning man, a man on fire. He would throw his whole soul into his preaching and his work. If we are full of fire and full of life we are sure to be a blessing to others. But we can only get this warmth of heart by being much in the presence of God. "While I was musing, the fire burned." (4) His knowledge was limited. "He spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." So he did not know everything. Who does? You cannot know everything even when you are a missionary. (5) He was willing to learn. Aquila and Priscilla expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. This shows the humility of his mind. He was willing to be helped by others, even these two workers in sailcloth. A humble man is willing to learn from anybody—tentmaker or gardener, fisherman or carpenter

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—who can tell him more than he knows of Christ and the Scriptures. But some men are too proud to learn. They are afflicted with the malady known as *imaginary greatness*. May we all be saved from it. (6) He was a great help to others. "He helped them much who had believed through grace." The people of God still need help in many ways. They need instruction in the Word of God. They need direction in the ways which be in Christ. And many need comfort and consolation in their trials. (7) He preached Christ. This is the one inexhaustible theme. In Christ and Him crucified there is every help that a soul can want. With such a theme why should any preacher waste time in talking toothless platitudes and airy nothings?

### II.—The Message.

1. Repentance. Our Lord began His ministry by crying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4. 17). He ends it by commanding His disciples to preach repentance among all nations. We hear too little of repentance in these days. We do not mean that the word should occur in every Gospel address we give, but our preaching should aim at reaching the conscience and leading men to repentance, toward God and faith, toward our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to preach the hard, stern fact of human guilt. Man is by nature impenitent until he

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knows himself to be guilty. He does not perceive the awful enormity of his sin. Once his conscience is reached by the Word of God he sees his guilt; sins which he thought were no sins appear in their true character, and he cries, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." We must preach the solemn reality of coming judgment. Sometimes judgment warnings lead to repentance, as Jonah's preaching did at Nineveh. Men, with their various no Hell theories, would fain explain away, or soften down, the awful wrath of God against sin. But the Bible teaches the doctrine of conscious eternal punishment for every soul that dies impenitent. Oh, then, let us solemnly, lovingly, tenderly, warn sinners to "flee from the wrath to come." But some say, "If you do not draw men by love, you will not drive them by fear." This is nonsense, for men are moved by fear every day. All men everywhere are summoned to repent *because* judgment is coming. Life and death, Heaven and Hell, call men to repent. We should preach much about the goodness of God, for the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. He is good in prolonging life and withholding punishment. He is not willing that any should perish, and has provided salvation for all who will receive it. The old, old story of Jesus and His love has moved many to repentance. But what is repentance? In its primary sense it is a change of mind or

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purpose. The parable of the two sons (Matt. 21. 28-31) illustrates this primary use of the word. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went." This was true repentance. It would not have been sufficient for this young man merely to admit his wrong and express regret for it. Sorrow for sin is not repentance. Repentance is a definite act, not a bundle of emotions. *He repented and went.* Repentance involves such a change of mind in relation to God and to sin as affects the whole character and life.

2. Remission of sins. The same word is here used in connection with proclaiming the Gospel, as in John 20. 23: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." These words were not spoken to a priestly class, but to the whole community of the disciples. Their power of remission was exercised by preaching the Gospel of Christ. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10. 43). The proclamation has a twofold effect, according as it is received or rejected. To him who receives it his sins are forgiven, but to him who rejects it his sins are retained. Remission of sins is pardon, *free, full, and eternal.* It is free because Jesus died. Among the last words He spoke to His disciples He said,

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"This is My blood, shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28).

"Pardon for sins of deepest dye.  
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood."

God's forgiveness is full. Blessed be His Name, every sin He is ready to forgive. He has already pardoned sinners more numerous than can be estimated by human arithmetic. There are thousands now alive who know their sins forgiven, and there are multitudes at home with the Lord who praise Him continually because He loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood. Let us preach this Gospel of full forgiveness everywhere; it will touch men's hearts and draw them to the Saviour as nothing else will. Men are very slow to forgive; it is a long time before they can get over an injury, but the forgiveness of God wells up from an infinite fountain. "His mercy endureth for ever." There is no room for anybody to despair. "We may let every thief know that

"The dying thief rejoiced to see  
That fountain in his day;  
And there may they, though vile as he,  
Wash all their sins away."

God's forgiveness is everlasting; it is a permanent pardon. He does not forgive to-day and accuse us again to-morrow. Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without repentance. He never gives it and

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then repents that He has done so. Men can forgive, but they cannot forget; they keep brooding over the old offence, and feel grieved again. But when God forgives men they are forgiven to all eternity. He says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"

### III.—The Multitudes.

1. We have seen that Christ taught the disciples what they were to preach. He also taught them where it was to be preached: "Among all nations." These are the Master's marching orders: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." We cannot get rid of our obligations to carry out this world-wide commission by claiming that we are specially interested in the work at home. Those who do most at home are generally interested in the work abroad too. We all need to think far more than we do upon the awful condition of the heathen, held, as they are, in the grip of superstition, idolatry, witchcraft, priestcraft, and sins unmentionable. A lessened conception of their terrible state means a lessened missionary zeal. The need of the nations is as great to-day as ever. They differ in intelligence, habits, language, colour, but they all need the Gospel. The population of the world is about fifteen hundred millions—China alone has a larger population than the whole known world in the time of Christ—India has twice as many

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millions as any Caesar ever governed, yet one half of these multitudes has never heard the glad tidings which were for all people. The need is great, but the opportunities are also great. A hundred years ago the world was practically closed to the missionary. Now its doors are wide open. Then we have a message that suits all nations. The Gospel is the remedy for every human ill among all the races of the world. It has already won great triumphs in the dark places of the earth. Large numbers have been turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven. What an inspiration it is to read such books as Dr. Pierson's "Divine Enterprise of Missions," and his "New Acts of the Apostles." To read the stories of John G. Paton, Hudson Taylor, F. S. Arnot, and others is to see the hand of God most manifestly displayed in the salvation of the lost.

"Salvation, oh, salvation,  
The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till earth's remotest nation  
Has heard Messiah's Name."

2. The risen Lord taught the disciples not only what to preach and where to preach, but where to begin: "Beginning at Jerusalem." But why begin there? There may have been many reasons for making that the starting point. We may suggest a few. It meant giving the Jew the first offer of salvation. "To the Jew first" is still the divine order.

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We shall not be faithful to our trust unless we preach the Gospel to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. Let the seed of Israel have the Gospel presented to them, and if they reject it we shall be clear of their blood. Again, they were to begin at Jerusalem, because the biggest sinners lived there. There they lived who crucified the Lord of life and glory. He might have passed them by, or He might have said, "Take your swords and slay these, my enemies;" but instead He bade them first preach the Gospel to His murderers. The greatest sinners were to be the objects of the greatest mercy. Further, beginning at Jerusalem meant beginning at home. Jerusalem was the capital of their own land. They were to begin among their own kith and kin. If you desire to serve the Lord in the foreign field, take care that you begin in your own family circle. Make sure that you have done all you can to bring your unsaved relations to the Saviour. Begin in connection with your own Assembly. Some Assemblies are dying out for want of aggressive Gospel work. They know lots of truth. They know so much about their standing in Christ that they cannot do anything but stand. They need to be stirred up to more activity in the work of the Gospel. No Assembly can be in a healthy condition without taking an active interest in proclaiming the Gospel. Begin in your own town or country. Amidst

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the vast claims of other lands there is a danger that the need of home lands should be forgotten. It is wonderful how enthusiastic some can be over work in foreign lands, and how little they care for either work or workers at home. Their eyes are in the ends of the earth and they can see nothing nearer. But interest in the work abroad does not free us from responsibility at home. The Lord of the harvest who sends the labourers bids them begin with the fields nearest home. It is a mistake to suppose that people at home know the Gospel; many of them do not know it. In many so-called "churches" the Gospel is never heard. In some cases the preachers themselves are unsaved. They may have university degrees and flattering titles, but these can never take the place of the new birth and the gift of the Spirit. Such men do not know the Gospel, and therefore cannot preach it. They are more learned in the infidelities of the times than in the truth of God. Then many "churches" have gone over to the "Devil's mission of amusement." Entertainment for the people is their leading article. They cannot be expected to run shows and small theatres and succeed in preaching the Gospel. Then let us think of the multitudes who never come under the sound of the Gospel where it is preached. They are so occupied in business, in money-making, and pleasure-seeking that they have no time for the things

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that matter most—the things of eternity. Then again, let us think of the increasing infidelity and of the sin which abounds on every hand, and we must conclude that the one thing these lands need to hear is the clear ringing of the Gospel bells. Lastly, the disciples were to begin at Jerusalem, because it was the centre from which the Gospel was to spread to the ends of the earth. “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1. 8). This programme was adhered to throughout by the early Church. Thus we find the Gospel spreading from a single upper room in Jerusalem to temples, schools, dwellings, prisons, shipboard, cities, towns, streets, isles, and listened to by kings, governors, captains, soldiers, slaves, women, and children, and winning triumphs among all sorts of people in spite of the fiercest opposition from both Jews and Gentiles, until we find Paul in Rome preaching and teaching with all confidence, no man forbidding him. Here the book of Acts stops, but does not end; the work is still unfinished. The same programme remains for all Christians. Beginning with the fields nearest home, our aim should be to see the Gospel spreading until in ever-widening circles it reaches the uttermost part of the earth, and none can say of the children of men “nobody ever told us before.”

# The Lord's Coming.

## I.—The Promise.

John 14. 1-3.

THE promise of Christ's second coming was addressed to the hearts of these early disciples as a cure for their troubles. Judas was soon to betray the Lord, Peter would soon deny Him—these, and other things, troubled the disciples. But the worst trouble of all was that the Lord was going away to leave them, and they fancied that if He left them they had lost Him, so they felt crushed and desolate at the very thought. It was to comfort their hearts that He gave them this exceeding great and precious promise: "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Never before had He used the first personal pronoun when He spoke of His return. In the wider circle of His ministry He usually spoke of the coming of "the Son of Man," but in this speech there is an arresting directness, because He is speaking to His own. It is the secret of the Lord addressed to them that fear Him. What could be more comforting to them than to know that He was really coming again? Harry Moorhouse once visited a dying saint, and as he sat by her bedside he said: "I am going to read you the sweetest verse in the New Testament." So

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he read to her the second verse of this chapter: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He stopped there, and the dying saint looked up and said: "That's not the sweetest verse in the New Testament, but the next one to it." And then she quoted the Lord's own promise: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." To her the sweetest thought was not the many mansions, but the personal coming of the One whom having not seen she loved. So it must ever be with those who truly love the Lord. We must long for the time when we shall see Him coming in His glory. That moment will be at once the end of all our trials and the consummation of all our joys.

1. Christ will surely come according to His own definite promise: "I will come again." It is one of His *I wills*, and it cannot be broken. In the very closing words of the Bible we find the same promise renewed and confirmed. It is the very last promise of Scripture: "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22. 20). He says, "surely;" that means, "Yes, yes; there can be no doubt about it." There are not many things that we can say surely about. We cannot be sure of reaching home to-night; we cannot be sure of anything to-morrow or next week. The only thing we can be sure of in this life is that there is

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nothing sure. But amid all this uncertainty there is one thing we need have no doubt about—Jesus is really coming. It is one of the triumphant certainties of the Christian faith. His promise makes it certain, and His *surely* makes it more immovable than rocks or hills. His enemies cannot stop His coming or delay it by the twinkling of an eye. It is the great event to which everything is working up. May the blessed hope burn more brightly in all our hearts!

2. His coming will be literal. Many would rob us of the sweetness of the promise by saying, "He means His coming for us at death." But death is never contemplated as a necessity, nor even a probability, for the believer. When the Lord in answering Peter's inquiry regarding John said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" No one ever thought that Christ meant John's departure by death, for immediately the saying went abroad that that disciple should not die. Moreover, such expressions as "Looking for that blessed hope," and "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," show that this event and not death was the hope of the early Church.

3. His coming will be *personal, visible*, and with blessing for His own. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into Heaven" (Acts 1. 11).

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This is the message of the angels concerning His coming. It was fitting that angels who had heralded His birth, watched His grave, and announced His resurrection should now proclaim His coming again. They said, "This same Jesus shall so come." The angels knew Him; they had watched Him all His earthly life. "He was seen of angels." The same Jesus who lived here and died, and rose again, is coming just as the disciples saw Him go. How was that? Listen! He lifted His pierced hands and pronounced upon them words of blessing, and while in the attitude of benediction He begins to rise from the earth; He rose to mid air, and speedily to the regions of the clouds. As the disciples stood spellbound with astonishment a bright cloud received Him out of their sight. No whirlwind or chariot of fire accompanied Him, as in the case of Elijah. He did not need these. He was going where He had been before, to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and He is there to-night—the same glorified Man. This same Jesus is coming as they saw Him go. He went away personally and in bodily form; He will come personally and in bodily form. He went away visibly; His disciples saw Him going. He will come visibly; His own shall see Him coming. Himself, and not an angel or arch-angel. "The Lord Himself shall descend."

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"Oh, I shall see Him descending the skies,  
Coming for me, for me!"

He went away in the act of blessing His own.  
He is coming again in blessing to His own.  
He will bring again His ancient power, His  
tenderness, and love, and will gather us to  
Himself.

### II.—The Purpose.

Now look at the purpose of His coming.

1. He is coming to complete His redemption plan. His redemption extends even to the bodies of His people. Multitudes of Christians have fallen asleep, and their bodies have gone to dust in the quiet churchyard or the city cemetery, or in the depth of the moaning ocean. "But what matters where they lie—beneath the trench, or away down the dark, impenetrable deep, where weary seamen sleep," Jesus will soon be on His way to wake them. We have the Word of God for it: "They *shall* rise." The God of Resurrection shall pick their bodies from the dust of death and fashion and fit them for the eternal home. The walls of Jericho toppled to ruin to the sound of trumpeting and shouting, and God's people marched to victory. So it will be when the Lord comes. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4. 16). He will burst the fortifica-

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tions of the tomb, and they shall rise and shout: "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, death, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15. 35). What comfort this ought to bring to sorrowing saints, as they stand in dying chambers and by open graves feeling as though their heart strings would break.

"Hush, be every murmur dumb;  
It is only till He come."

2. But multitudes of God's people will be alive when He comes, and none of them shall pass through death. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. 15. 51). We who are gathered here to-night may be alive when He comes, but the living must be changed, and, oh, what a change when we shall see His face! Our bodies of humiliation will be fashioned like unto the body of His glory, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15. 53). So we may go to Heaven without dying as Elijah did. The children of the prophets did not believe that he had gone up to Heaven without dying, so they sent to seek him upon the mountain. When the Church has gone perhaps they may seek for some of us upon the mountains, but we shall then be far beyond these dark hills of time in a far serener clime. Now note the rapidity with which all this takes place: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

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last trump" (1 Cor. 15. 52). The most timid will not have time to be frightened; it will be all over quick as the lightning flash. "The last trump" may be a military reference. It is said that the Roman army had three trumpets. The first one sounded "pack up," the second one "fall in," and the third one "march." Only the last one is mentioned here. Christians have heard the other two, and are ready—waiting for the final blast to call them home. They can sing:

"When the mighty, mighty trump sounds  
Come, come away;  
Oh, now we are ready to hail  
The glad day!"

3. Now note what will take place when the dead are raised and the living changed. They will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. That will be the day of glad reunions when we shall meet with many a loved one. The raising of the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7. 11) gives us a picture of the joys of that day. Moved with compassion for the sorrowing woman, Jesus bid her "weep not." But more than words are needed to stay her grief. The astonished crowd heard Him speak to the dead, and say, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." The Lord then delivered him to his mother. No doubt the young man was glad to be restored to his mother; and how glad the mother was to

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receive her son from the dead! Death had divided them for a time, but they were united again. That was sorrow turned into joy. Well it will all happen again on a greater and grander scale when Jesus comes.

#### III.—The Prospect.

What is the present prospect in regard to His coming? May we expect Him soon? Yes; His last promise is, "Surely I come quickly." It is evidently God's purpose that we should live in daily, hourly expectation of that great event. But we have no Scripture authority for attempting to fix dates. Miles of books have been written on prophecy, many of them fixing the date for our Lord's return, but time has disproved them all. Every few years we hear of some one who has found the clue, so he bases calculations upon Bible dates, deductions drawn from analogies, or astronomical phenomena, etc., and thinks he can tell us to within an hour or two when the Lord will come. It is a waste of time to read such productions. It is still true that of the day and hour knoweth no man. We read in Acts 1. 7: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." This is one of the things which is marked "not for you." Enough for us to know that our times are in the Father's hands, and prophetic times are in His hands too. We know our Lord is coming, and

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coming very soon. The Scripture puts nothing between us and this blessed hope. He mentions no event that must take place before He comes in the air to gather His loved ones home. He may come at any moment.

But although we may not fix dates, the Word of God makes it clear that we are in the last days. Daniel was told to "shut up and seal the book until the time of the end" (Dan. 12. 4). But the Apostle John, who wrote the book of Revelation, was told not to seal "the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22. 10). The last days had already set in then, and we must now be in the very last of the last days. The coming of the Lord for His Church is not dependent upon signs, but there are many signs mentioned in the Scriptures whereby we know that it is the last time—that we are nearing the close of the present dispensation.

We have only time to mention three.

1. The Social Signs. In 2 Timothy 3. 2-5 we are reminded that in the last days perilous times shall come, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having

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a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." This is being fulfilled before our eyes. Then on every hand and in every country there is unrest. Nation has risen against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. We hear of wars and rumours of wars, and there is no rest anywhere. What a scene of confusion this world must present to the eye of God—something like the bustle on an ant-heap. The golden dreams of the war orator of the peaceful days which were to follow the war have not been fulfilled; the sword is still unsheathed. But we are told such things have always been; that may be true, but these signs are increasing in number and intensity with the passing years. There can be no lasting peace to this sad earth until He comes whose name is "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

2. Again, we have ecclesiastical signs. The Epistles to the Thessalonians and Timothy lead us to expect in the last days heresies and novelties in religion. This, too, is being fulfilled. Men are turning away from the truth of the Bible, and are being turned to fables. False teachers and false doctrines abound. We have Christian Science, Spiritualism, Russellism, Mormonism, all rapidly increasing in numbers and in influence for evil. Everything around us proclaims that Christ is coming.

3. Then lastly, we have Jewish signs. We

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are told to learn from the fig-tree that "when her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh" (Mark 13. 28). The fig-tree is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nation. Great blessing is in store for these ancient people after their long time of dispersion among the nations. They will yet be restored to their own land, and through them the whole world shall be blessed. They are even now showing signs of fresh life. There are more Jews in Jerusalem now than in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. A young Jewish scientist had some great secret which was needed by the Allies during the great war. He gladly gave them his secret, and when he was asked his price he wanted no money. He only asked that his people should be given the right to settle in their own land—Palestine for the Jews. He was promised this right at the close of the war, and the promise was fulfilled. Palestine freed from the rule, or misrule, of the unspeakable Turk is rapidly reviving. These are all signs that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

### IV.—The Power of His Coming.

Now just a few words in closing about the practical power of this great truth. The coming of the Lord is an intensely practical doctrine. What a man believes influences his conduct, and if we believe that Christ is really coming it will make us practical Christians.

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1. It will make us holy in life. "He that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." If we have the hope of being like Christ when we see Him as He is we will be doing our best to be like Him now. Holiness is not feeling, it is character. We must put out of our lives everything that is unlike Christ, and bring into them every grace, every virtue, every quality that increases our likeness to Him. "With such a blessed hope in view we would more holy be."

2. It will make us diligent in His service. We are not taught the truth of His coming merely that we may know, but that we may do. This blessed hope should set us harder at work than anything else can do. Our opportunities for serving Him down here will soon be over. Oh, for grace to make the best use of the "little while" for His glory! The Thessalonians waited for His coming, but served while they waited. They sounded out the Word of the Lord. If we are really expecting Christ to come we will seek to carry the Gospel to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. What if your service is taken little notice of either by the Church or the world. Don't be discouraged. There is always most peace to the man who is least talked about. The big report meeting is coming in the morning, and all your service will be remembered and abundantly rewarded. He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my

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reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22. 12).

3. It will make us patient in trial. Are you suffering in body? Well, our pain shall soon be over. We'll sin and sigh no more. Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Are you misunderstood, and consequently misrepresented? Then, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4. 5). Has your reputation been stained by foul drops from the venomous tongue of some slanderer? Don't worry. Say with Paul, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will reward him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4. 14). Cheer up! The Lord will soon be here, and all our trials will end in peace.

"How will recompense His smile  
The sufferings of this little while."

The coming of the Lord is set before us as our hope, both sure and steadfast, and there is nothing so sustaining as hope. How could we live without it? The happy school boy who expects to go home for his holidays next week is inspired by hope. The old man whose travelling days are done, but he is patiently waiting the return of some long absent loved one, is sustained by hope. Of both we may say:

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"Hope cheers them with its sunniest note,  
'Tis better on before."

But earthly hopes may not be realised; they are uncertain. The Christian's hope is certain; it can never disappoint.

"He is coming; we are waiting  
With a hope that cannot fail."

The Christian's hope is not something less than faith; it is something more. Albert Barnes gives the definition of it: "Hope is a complex emotion, a desire for a certain object, and a well-grounded expectation of obtaining that object." We desire and expect to see our blessed Lord and be like Him. Our expectation is well grounded; it rests upon His own unfulfilling promise. Let us live in the power of this blessed hope, its music will cheer us in the conflict, and its song will shorten the journey "till He come."

"Hold the fort for I am coming,  
Jesus signals still;  
Send the answer back to Heaven,  
By Thy grace *we will*."

## The Perfect Gospel.

Romans I to VIII.

A YOUNG preacher once read in a Gospel meeting the parable of the great supper, and began his address by saying, "I will not have any time for an introduction to-night, so we will just begin the feast."

I think we must follow this example in dealing with the Epistle to the Romans. There are many things of an introductory nature which we must pass over for want of time. For example: the writer, the time, place, and circumstances of writing the book.

The Epistle to the Romans has been called "God's Shorter Catechism," "The Perfect Gospel," "The Profoundest Book in Existence," and "The Greatest Masterpiece of Reason and Argument ever conceived by the Human Mind." The book contains the great base blocks of Christianity. It sets forth the great central truths of the Gospel for all time. It is the complete answer to Job's question, "How can a man be justified with God?" Three thoughts are prominent throughout:

Righteousness needed by both Jew and Gentile.

Righteousness provided by grace through faith.

Righteousness exhibited in life and conduct.

## FOLLOWING FULLY.

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, because this righteousness of God is revealed in it: "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." These words may be taken as the text of which Romans is the exposition. It is true both of the Gospel as Paul preached it and as he wrote it in Romans.

Having declared the nature of the Gospel, he proceeds to show the need for such a Gospel, because all are unrighteous, and therefore condemned. Over the first three chapters we may write the word *Condemnation*; over chapters 4, 5 the word *Justification*, and over chapters 6, 7, and 8 the word *Sanctification*. In connection with condemnation the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. Before speaking of condemnation we shall look for a moment at God's principles of judgment as set out in these opening chapters. The principles here stated are the same which will be in operation at the Great White Throne when unbelievers will be finally condemned.

The judgment of God is according to truth, that is, He deals with naked facts. He deals with man as he really is, and not as he seems to be.

His judgment is without respect of persons, Jew or Gentile: He deals only with the case. A man is not condemned because he is a Gentile, a man is not justified because he is a Jew. If a man has sinned without a written law he will be judged accordingly.

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If a man has sinned with a written law, and in spite of it, he will be judged accordingly.

His judgment is "according to my Gospel." Christ Himself will be the Judge, and none shall be able to stand except those who are clad in God's righteousness alone. Two classes are described as under condemnation:

### I.—The Gentiles.

The Gentiles are not exclusively what we call the heathen, but all Gentiles. But though not belonging to the chosen race God had left them without excuse.

They had conscience bearing them witness. They had an inner consciousness of God; in this way God gave every man an opportunity to know Him, but this opportunity was either ignored or abused. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and lapsed into idolatry and sensuality unmentionable.

Again, they had a revelation outside themselves in nature and in providence. The heavens declared His glory, the firmament showing His handy work, and the stars

"For ever singing as they shine,  
The hand that formed us is divine."

This knowledge, inward and outward, was sufficient to lead them to God, but they held down the truth by their unrighteousness, so God gave them up to their vile affections. The punishment for their sin was more sin, to be

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placed completely under its dominion and power. The first chapter of Romans presents an awful picture of what man is capable of when left to himself, when God has given him up. He sinks lower than the beasts that perish. There is a book entitled "The Ascent of Man," but Romans 1 is "The Descent of Man." May we learn from it what an awful thing it is to despise or misuse the light which God has given us!

But from the opening of chapter 2 it would seem there were some individuals who had not outwardly practised these things, but they had the same fallen and depraved nature. These outwardly respectable people—whether Jew or Gentile—would consider themselves better than the open sinners we have been describing. They would become judges of others, and would acquiesce in the sentence passed upon them. An old man was once called into the witness box in a Court of Justice, but instead of getting into the witness box he took a wrong turn and found himself on the bench where the judge sat. The judge saw his embarrassment, and said, "Well, mister, do you want to be a judge?" "Indeed, yer honour," said the old man, "it's all I'm fit for, for I'm near blind." So self-righteous sinners are, so blind to their own condition, they are only fit to sit in judgment on others. All may not be equally guilty as to outward acts, but as to the great fact of guilt before God

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"there is no difference," for all have sinned.

### II.—The Jews are Next Passed Under Review.

They, too, were guilty in spite of their great privileges.

They were Jews. It was a great privilege to be a Jew; our Lord was a Jew. The Apostle Paul was a Jew. The Jews were God's chosen earthly people: "You only have I known of all the peoples of the earth."

They gloried in the true God, they put no confidence in idols like their heathen neighbours. To know the one true and living God was surely a great privilege.

To them were entrusted the oracles of God. The word "oracles" doubtless had reference to the most holy place in the Tabernacle, where the High Priest learned the divine mind. It means "God's speaking place," and so is applied to the Scriptures: God's revelation to man. This was another great privilege. From these Scriptures they could read their own destiny; in them they learned God's will, and because of their knowledge of Scripture could discern and approve the things which were excellent. Did all these things prove to their advantage? No; they failed to do God's will. They became Jews in the letter only—that was outwardly. So the Jew is more guilty than his Gentile neighbour, because he has sinned against greater light.

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Jew and Gentile make up the world, and "all the world is guilty before God;" "all have sinned and come short of His glory." Then a black list is given in which thirteen indictments are brought against mankind which are certainly not flattering to the human race: "Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit," etc.

In face of all these terrible facts

### III.—How Can Man be Made Righteous?

How can he be justified with God? This Paul proceeds to show; he sets before us "Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan" of being justified:

By *Grace*. Man has no righteousness of his own, but he may become righteous in another. This is pure grace on God's part. It is all of grace, therefore given freely: "Being justified freely by His grace." It is not now a righteousness required *from* man, but a righteousness offered *to* man and imputed to him the moment he believes.

It is *by Blood*. It is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It comes to us by way of the Cross; Christ's death is the propitiation—the mercy-seat. The High Priest sprinkled the blood on the mercy-seat, showing that sin had been atoned for, that a Victim had died for the guilty and the blood of atonement covered sin. So Christ's death paid the penalty for us:

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"He bore on the tree the sentence for me,  
And now both the surety and sinner are free."

His death provides remission for the sins which are past—the sins committed aforesaid. The Old Testament believers looked forward to the Cross and were saved; we look backward to the Cross and are saved. The Cross is the grand centre of attraction—to both. I have seen a picture in which the central figure represented the Lord Jesus Christ, and grouped around Him were some smaller figures representing prophets, apostles, martyrs, all coming from different directions, but all looking to the One in the centre, and around Him these words were printed: "To Him give all the prophets witness that, through His Name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

Justification is *by Faith*. "The just shall live by faith." The moment the sinner believes and accepts the righteousness provided for him, that moment he is justified, and that without works or merit of any kind. Two Old Testament characters are now introduced to illustrate the great truth that salvation comes by faith only.

ABRAHAM—the national head of the race. This man was justified before the law was given and before circumcision was enjoined. He believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; he believed God against all the arguments of unbelief, and was strong in faith, giving glory to God. The case of

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Abraham illustrates chiefly the value of faith in God.

The second illustration is DAVID—the royal head of the race. He lived under law, and broke it grievously. Oh, how terribly this man sinned, but how deeply he repented; and God forgave the iniquity of his sin. His case illustrates the blessing that faith brings. David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. How graphically the thirty-second Psalm describes the blessedness of sins forgiven. Its title is, "A Psalm of David Giving Instruction," and it does instruct us on this greatest of all subjects, how a man may know his sins forgiven.

Let us look now for a moment at some of this blessedness, as described in the first part of chapter 5.

### IV.—Our New Standing in Grace.

1. JUSTIFIED. That is more than being saved and forgiven. It means that we are reckoned righteous, and we are treated accordingly. This great blessing comes to us because Jesus died and rose again: "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Robert Flockhart was an open-air preacher in Edinburgh; he sometimes used very striking illustrations from his own experience; he had been a soldier in his time. In illustrating the value

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of Christ's resurrection he told of a companion of his who took ill and made a will, and left all his possessions to Robert Flockhart; but contrary to expectation the soldier recovered and Robert Flockhart got nothing. Some years after he was in another regiment, and he had another companion who took ill, and he too made a will and left his possessions to Robert Flockhart, but in his case the illness proved fatal, he died. But then the relatives and the lawyer took the matter in hand and found some flaw in the wording of the will, and again Robert Flockhart got nothing. He said, "You see, I lost my first legacy because my friend did not die, and I lost my second legacy because my friend did not rise again to secure to me all he intended should be mine through his death." But Jesus both died and rose again. "Who shall condemn us now, since Christ has died and risen and gone above?"

2. PEACE. We have peace with God—that is the peace of relationship. When we accept Christ the strife ceases. Peace with God has really taken place though we may not enter into the full enjoyment of it. The enjoyment of peace is the result of believing the Word of God.

3. ACCESS. We have access into this grace, into the divine presence. He has gone in before us. Let us make use of this great privilege for closer communion with God.

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4. **GLORY.** We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have now a clear vision of a blessed future in store for us, when even these bodies shall be changed and we shall be like Him.

5. **TRIBULATION.** We glory in tribulation; all life has taken on a new meaning; we no longer look upon things as we used to do, our disappointments are His appointments; our trials are blessings in disguise, and death itself but the entrance into the better life in the better land.

6. **THE HOLY SPIRIT** comes into our heart and abides. All believers have the Holy Spirit, but some have not His fulness.

7. **SAVED.** We are saved from wrath through Him. We have no dread of future punishment, the torments and the fire our eyes shall never see.

The remainder of chapter 5 traces all our blessings up to our union with Christ our Head.

### V.—Sanctification

Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

**PRINCIPLES OF HOLINESS.** The question now arises: "Can a righteous man be kept righteous?" "Is salvation by grace a safe doctrine?" Yes, the doctrine of grace is not an apology for sin, but leads to a life of holiness. The Apostle supposes an opponent who will ask a question like this: "If it be

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true that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, why not have more sin that the greatness of grace may be displayed?" In other words, "Let us do evil that good may come;" but the believer cannot continue in sin that grace may abound, because:

He is reckoned as having died with Christ, and is therefore under no obligation to sin—to commit sin. No justified man will live in sin as his element; he cannot continue in its territory, its service, or its company. He must reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Death to sin is symbolised in the ordinance of believers' baptism. The believer is immersed in and under water—the symbol of his death and burial with Christ. He is dead to the world, as touching fellowship with it; dead to the law, as touching condemnation by it; dead to sin, as touching service to it. But he emerges from the water again symbolising his resurrection with Christ to newness of life. The Devil does not like this doctrine, so he has completely perverted the ordinance of baptism and sought to establish in its place household or infant baptism, generally administered by sprinkling, which has no resemblance whatever to either burial or resurrection. In Acts 8 we have the record of a real New Testament baptism, when Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and came up out of it again. Baby

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baptism is no more like Bible baptism than chalk is like cheese. It is the Devil's imitation of God's reality.

A justified man may have complete mastery over individual acts of sin. This is accomplished by the presentation of the members to God who is able to control and use them for His glory. All our redeemed faculties should be yielded up to Him:

"Let my hands perform His bidding,  
Let my feet run in His ways;  
Let my eyes see Jesus only,  
Let my lips speak forth His praise."

The keyword of the first part of Romans 6 is *reckon*. The keyword of the second part is *present*, or *yield*.

The method of victory over sin is set forth by an illustration from slavery. Death with Christ has freed us from the old master, Sin, and brought us under control of our new Master, Christ. To practise sin would be to deny the new Master. When serving sin we were free from the claims of righteousness; now that we are serving Christ we are free from the claims of sin. We are free from sin in the sense that a man may be free from an old master. So long as we are here we are never free from sin in the sense that a piece of gold may be free from mixture.

### VI.—The Pursuit of Holiness

#### Chapter 7.

We now come to chapter 7, one of the

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battlefields of Scripture. Theologians have had many controversies over it, and we may not hope to settle these. Some think it describes the experience of a man before his conversion, others are certain it is the experience of a man after his conversion. Probably the truth will be found between these two views. Possibly Paul may be describing the transitions of his own experience, how he passed from one stage to another. Some things in the earlier part of the chapter seem to speak the feelings of a man under deep conviction. While some of the language in the later part of the chapter would only be used by one who was truly the Lord's, but not yet enjoying full deliverance from the power of sin.

The chapter shows the inability of the law to sanctify as it was to justify. The same death which has freed from sin as a master has freed from the law as a rule of life. The illustration of marriage is here used. The believer has died judicially to the law, and is married lawfully to another, even Christ.

The chapter also shows the inability of fleshly struggle to secure victory over sin. He found the law of sin working in his members, and was often overcome by the sin he vainly tried to conquer, until he cried out in despair, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"

At last he found the Deliverer, and ex-

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claimed: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This note of praise is sounded before he proceeds to describe the method of victory or the practise of holiness. Through Christ a new law had come into his life—the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The word law is here used in the sense in which we speak of certain fixed principles in nature. Certain forces are said to act always according to fixed rules or principles; for example, the law of gravitation. The old law of sin was still there, but a new, a counteracting law had come in. I once saw a man testing some new kind of lifebelt, it looked like an air cushion; he jumped into the water, clothes, boots, and all, but he did not sink. The lifebelt was the counteracting force. So God has given us the Holy Spirit, and if our lives are controlled by Him we shall never go under.

Now, just a word in closing about chapter 8. It has been said that the seventh chapter of Romans is like a starless night, while the eighth chapter of Romans is like

### VII.—A Sunny Morning with Promise

of a bright to-morrow.

It begins with "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." He has borne our judgment for us, and in Him we can sing:

"No condemnation, oh, my soul,  
'Tis God that speaks the Word;  
Perfect in comeliness art thou  
In Christ thy glorious Lord."

## THE PERFECT GOSPEL.

The chapter goes on to show that there can be no accusation. The Spirit Himself indwells us, bearing witness that we are the sons of God. Then God is for us, and who can be against us? Christ has died and risen again, then who can condemn us? He is even now at the Father's right hand making intercession for us, so we need fear nothing. The enjoyment of these great truths will help us to live above the trials of this life until we rise to be for ever with Him. A gentleman saw a boy flying a kite, and as he came nearer he noticed the boy was blind, so he said to him: "What pleasure do you find in flying your kite when you cannot see it?" The boy smiled, and said, "Sure I feel her tuggin'." Let us take hold of these grand truths and we'll feel their upward tug.

The chapter closes with no separation. These closing words are the grand climax to Paul's long argument that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. What a difference there is between the beginning and the end of his argument. It began in tones of sadness, depicting man as lost, ruined, depraved, and under the dark shadow of the wrath of God; it ends in tones of gladness, showing the believer saved, justified, sanctified, and basking in the sunlight of the love of God from which no foe can sever. It would be a study in itself to note carefully the things Paul enumerates as all helpless to

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sever him from the love of God. He first names the extremes of death and life. Life with all its trials cannot do it. Death, the great divider that unclasps the hands of dearest friends, cannot unclasp the hand of eternal love. Again, he mentions the extremes of created beings—angels, principalities, powers—they, too, are powerless to come between us and His love. Once more he mentions the extremes of time, "Things present, nor things to come." What we can see and what we cannot see. Present circumstances and future circumstances we need fear none of them, they cannot separate us from His love. Last, he mentions the extremes of space, depth nor height, Heaven nor Hell; and lest there is some created thing he cannot think of he adds, nor any other creature. They are all alike, powerless to

"Make Him His purpose forgo,  
Or sever my soul from His love."

Oh, if we get into the spirit of this magnificent song of triumph, and of the Gospel victories which it celebrates, it will wake the echoes of our heart and make us sing, both now and all our days, the grand old doxology:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

## Caleb—Pioneer Missionary.

Joshua 14. 6-12.

THIS little speech of Caleb's is full of good things. He unconsciously gives a portrait of himself, and the picture represents to us an ideal old age. Caleb was the grand old man of his time—as full of faith, of courage, and of vigour as he was full of years. He was a man of high Christian character, and his life may well be taken as a model from which to copy, an example which we should all seek to follow.

We shall look now at some of the lessons of his life, and may our meditation be the means of lasting blessing to us all.

### I.—His Character.

Look at this man's character; it will bear examination. Character counts for much in the service of God, whether at home or abroad. What a man is gives value to what he says and does.

1. *He was Wholehearted.* His name means "All Heart." There are not many of his kind to-day, but plenty all head—clear, clever, and cold. We know them by their cold words, and sometimes by cold and cruel actions. Oh, for more Calebs in the Church of God! Caleb was wholehearted for God and for His blessed service. We read of David's mighty men that they had not "a heart and a heart," a

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heart for David and a heart for Saul, too; they had an undivided heart, all for David, and their one ambition was to see him crowned king. May we be able to say of our David,

"Naught with Him our hearts dividing,  
All for Him content to leave."

2. *He was Honest.* He said, "I brought him word again as it was in my heart." Amid many temptations to be untrue he gave his report with strict sincerity. His heart was right with God, so he could afford to speak out just what was in it. In his case there was no need for mental reservation, for saying one thing while thinking another, for preaching one thing while believing another. The command, "Lie not one to another," was addressed to Christians, and it is as needful for Christians in these days as for those to whom it was first addressed. It is easy to drop into careless habits in regard to speech, to make promises and never think of fulfilling them, to exaggerate things we tell, and in other ways to be guilty of verbal inaccuracies.

3. *Caleb was Loving and Kind.* He spoke of the unbelieving spies as "my brethren." They had brought back an evil report which brought trouble into the camp, discouraged the people, and belied his own testimony, yet see how tenderly and lovingly he speaks of them as his brethren. If there had been no love in his heart he could easily have found other names that would have described them accurately,

## CALEB—PIONEER MISSIONARY.

but "love thinketh no evil," does not dwell on the evil; it can afford to pass over the failures of others in silence rather than enlarge upon them.

### II.—His Faith.

Look at Caleb's great faith. He had absolute confidence in the Word of God spoken through Moses.

1. His whole life was built upon the promise of God. Five times in this short address he uses the expression, "the Lord spake;" in the first of the five he unites Joshua with himself in the promise, but in the other four he seems to claim it for himself. In this he teaches us how to read the Bible—what was spoken to others we may claim for ourselves, and what was addressed to a number a single believer may claim for his own use. To Caleb the Word of God was very precious.

2. For forty-five years he had hid it in his heart, lived upon it, thought about it, believed it, and it never entered his head to have any doubt about it. He trusted it right on to the last, and at the very end of his life he came forward to claim the fulfilment of it. He claimed the promised blessing when he said, "Give me this mountain." The vision may tarry, but let us wait for it. The Word of God cannot fail. We may trust it with all our hearts; it has already proved itself both infallible and indestructible. After all the

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attacks made upon it by avowed enemies and by false friends, the old Book still stands, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." The books of the Bible are still able to say, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here," and when the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned, and all human writings have perished, the Word of our God shall stand for ever.

3. Caleb's life was nourished by instalments of fulfilment all along the way. Two promises had been given to him: one that his life should be prolonged, the other that he should yet possess the territory into which he had so bravely ventured. The daily fulfilment of the one promise fed his faith in the other. The present good was to him a guarantee of a better future.

"Each Ebenezer he had in review  
Confirmed God's good pleasure to bring him quite  
through."

Thus to the very end his life was full of hopefulness; he believed the best was yet to come. It is so for us. May we all feel the sustaining power of God's exceeding great and precious promises till that day when glory shall crown what grace has begun!

### III.—His Devotedness.

Caleb's life bears to be looked back at. He himself loved to look back and tell the story of that never-to-be-forgotten day when his

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service was approved by the Lord. Twice he quotes the eulogy passed on him by the divine lips—that he had wholly followed the Lord. "I wholly followed the Lord." Was this egotism? No! he was only accepting the word of approval which God had given him. We cannot accuse the brave soldier of egotism when he stands before the king to have his decorations pinned on his breast.

Now what is meant by following the Lord?

1. It means that Caleb recognised the Lord as his Leader, and he never ran before Him so as to outrun His providence and direct his own steps. He followed the Lord as the soldier follows his captain, waiting for his word of command. He followed the Lord as the disciple follows his teacher, waiting on his instructions. He followed the Lord as the mountain climber follows his guide, watching his every step. He followed the Lord as a dog follows his master, keeping him always in view and being as near to him as possible. If we all followed the Lord like this we might know more of His unerring guidance than we do. God is still the Leader of His people. He leads us by His Word, the better we know the Scriptures the more certain are we to know His will for us and what we ought to do. He also directs by His providence. What we call providence is just the hand of God in shaping events for our guidance. In Acts 16 we have the expression, "assuredly gathering." The

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apostles were brought into circumstances where they had to use the common-sense which God had given them, and by laying things together decide what the divine call was.

2. What is meant by following wholly? It means that he followed fully. With him there was no picking and choosing as to what he would do, no dividing between essentials and non-essentials, but just whatever God willed. This is what made him strong in service. He took the Lord's commands as he found them, and was as willing to fight giants as to carry grapes. It means that he followed constantly. For forty-five years he had followed on, not by fits and starts, as many do, but constantly. His trust in God was firm, so he stood where others failed. He held on his way through all the weary years of marching and counter marching, and surrounded as he was by innumerable deaths. Truly if he had been mindful of that country from which he came out he might have had opportunity to have returned, but he desired a better, so he pressed on. He could have said truthfully:

"Everywhere He leads me I will follow, follow on;  
Walking in His footsteps till the crown be won."

### IV.—His Reward.

Look at Caleb's reward.

1. His life was preserved in the time of judgment. The ten fell, but Caleb lived

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still; not only did he live, but he was rewarded with a long life of vigour; he was as strong at eighty-five as at forty. He had found the secret of perpetual youth, a life of unbroken trust in God and obedience to His Word. Mind has a marvellous influence over matter, and a mind at perfect peace with God; a life of continual trust in Him would doubtless be a great aid to bodily health. Caleb was the grand old man among his brethren, twenty years older than any of them, except Joshua. He would be pointed out to the rising generation as the man who had been preserved all through the wilderness journey, and who had faithfully followed the Lord in spite of all discouragements. His name would be an inspiration to those who came after him:

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We may make our lives sublime,  
And when dying leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time."

2. Again, he was rewarded by being put into hard service. The reward for work well done was more work to do. Here were these great warriors on Mount Hebron, the Anakims. Caleb was just the man to drive them out. Their great names, their great stature, and their strong defences could not resist the onset of his strong faith. He asked for Hebron because the Anakims were there, a sufficient reason some might think for avoiding it. Most of us want easy fields of labour, but to

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the last Caleb was ready for danger and enterprise.

His words about his wonderful strength were not meant for boast, but for thankfulness. He was ready for the conflict because he relied on the Lord's help in it. He said, "If so be the Lord will be with me, than I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said." That expression has the ring of an all-conquering faith. It is seldom we hear of an old soldier going in for new campaigns; he is generally more disposed to talk of past victories than to win new ones. He shoulders his crutch and shows how fields were won in days of yore. We hear a great deal about the wonderful days of old, and we are thankful for them; let us remember that God and His Word are still the same, and we may yet see greater days than these. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

3. The Lord gave Caleb the honour of enjoying to the full what he had once seen and longed to possess. Why was he so anxious to have it? There may have been several reasons; the first was that it had been promised, and in claiming it he was only claiming the blessing promised so long ago. The time that had elapsed, the greatness of the possession, and the presence of the giants in it made his possession of it seem unlikely, yet his faith claimed it, and he said, "Give me this moun-

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tain." Again, it was beneath the oaks of Hebron that Abraham had pitched his tent, and here were buried Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah, and these all died in faith; perhaps he wanted it on their account. Another reason; don't you think he would be anxious to blot out the heathen name, Kirjath-araba, and restore the name so often on the lips of Abraham, Hebron, the name which means friendship, fellowship, love. In any case it ought to be; it is the ambition of every true missionary to blot out the names of heathen sins, of heathen superstitions, and of heathen gods, and to put in their place the sweetest name on earth; to haul down the heathen standards that float over many a hamlet and village and town and country of this dark world of sin, and plant in their place the banner of the Cross.

Perhaps there is some young fellow here to-day, and God would give you a little mountain to conquer for Him in some of the dark places of the earth. Are you willing to go? Can you truthfully say, "Here am I, send me?"

"He is sounding out the trumpet that shall  
never call retreat,  
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His  
Judgment Seat;  
Be swift my soul to answer Him, be jubilant  
my feet,  
For God is marching on."

Many of us cannot go, but we can all pray

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with David Livingstone: "May Heaven's richest blessing come down on every one, whether European, American, or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world."

4. He was further rewarded by being made the means of blessing to those who were coming after. He gave his daughter the upper and the nether springs (chap. 15. 19). This insured constant refreshment and abiding fruitfulness. Every life like Caleb's is sure to bring blessing to others—sure to leave springs that shall go on to bless and refresh the generations yet to come.

5. Lastly, Caleb was victorious. "The land had rest from war." His life was an exception to the rule so often mentioned in the book of Joshua. "They were not able to drive them out." His victory was complete. So will ours be some day when the rightful King comes to reign. Let us labour on in the blessed hope of that day, when

"Jesus shall reign where ere the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run,  
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

In closing let me express the hope that Caleb's life may be an inspiration to us all in the little while that is left us, and when at last we stand, where he stood; on the last sinking sand of this fleeting life, may our faith, our courage, and our vigour be like his. May:

"Garments fresh and foot unwearied  
Tell how God has brought us through."

# Jonah the Prophet.

## The Prodigal Missionary.

THIS little book has been roughly handled by the unbelieving critics. It has been criticised, twisted, ridiculed, and pronounced a fiction. But the opinion of these unbelievers need not disturb us. Our blessed Lord has stamped it with the seal of *His* approval, and that settles for us the authenticity of the book (Matt. 12. 40). We believe that Jonah was a real person, a prophet of the Lord, and that his book is an honest, straightforward, and inspired record of facts which occurred in his own history. It is a story within a story. The book is a prophecy, but Jonah's personal history forms the chief part of it. His message was for the Gentiles, but the lessons of his life were for Israel, and for all Christians for all time. Some one has said that "Jonah is the most beautiful story ever told in so small a compass." It contains just 1328 words, and can be read through in six minutes. Let us all read it often and seek to understand it. But we cannot understand either Jonah or his book without God. We find God at every turn in this wonderful story. May we learn to look for God at every turn in our own life story. He has a plan and a purpose for the life of each of His people, and it is only as we recognise this and answer to His call that we can be well pleasing to Him. The Lord has the right to command His servants and to

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appoint their sphere of service. He calls some to serve Him in foreign lands, and others He keeps in home lands. But the great thing for us all, whether at home or abroad, is to be within the circle of God's will. Only there can we be blessed ourselves and made channels of blessing to others.

But Jonah objected to the field to which he was appointed. The Lord called Him to preach to the Gentiles, but he preferred to preach to the Jews. The Lord sent him to the East, but he ran away to the West. The Lord wanted him to stay on land, but instead he went to sea. Why was he so obstinate? Why so much at variance with the will and purpose of God? He had not entered into God's thoughts concerning the Gentiles. He had allowed his own thoughts and opinions to come between him and his obedience to God's plain command, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me." Evidently Jonah had no love for these Ninevites, and no desire to see them sharing in the privileges of God's chosen people. Had he been quite sure that they would remain impenitent and so be overthrown he would not have been overwhelmed with sorrow. He had yet to learn the lesson that Peter learned on the housetop at Joppa, that "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

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He may also have been thinking of his own reputation. He knew that God was merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and that there was just the possibility that Nineveh might repent and so judgment be averted, and then how foolish he would look. The people would say that Jonah was a false prophet, and that his message was all thunder and no lightning. Brethren, if we would serve the Lord faithfully we must not be too careful of our reputation; we must seek grace to do the right thing, and leave the issues with Him who sends us. "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord" (Psa. 4. 5). Whatever may have been the thoughts of Jonah's heart, he ran away from duty and from the special service to which God had called him.

The book shows us Jonah in four places:

1. In the Ship—Jonah paying (chap. 1. 3).
2. In the Fish—Jonah praying (chap. 1. 17).
3. In the City—Jonah preaching (chap. 3. 4)
4. In the Booth—Jonah pouting (chap. 4. 5).

In each of these strange schools God taught Jonah lessons which we all need to learn. At present we have only time to look at the lessons suggested by the first two divisions:

1. Jonah in the Ship. 2. Jonah in the Fish.  
May the study of these lessons be the means of blessing to us all!

### I.—IN THE SHIP—Jonah Paying.

"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish

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from the presence of the Lord, and he went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (chap. 1. 3). These solemn words describe the flight of Jonah. There is something awful in the very sound of them. He "rose up to flee;" he "went down to Joppa;" he "found a ship;" he "paid the fare;" he "went down into it." This vivid language reveals the doggedness of Jonah's purpose to have his own way. Step after step the disobedient prophet takes on his wayward course, each step taking him farther down and farther away from God. Tarshish, to a Hebrew, was at the other end of the world from Nineveh, and his choice of that out of the way place shows his determination to escape from duty. There is a very solemn lesson in the words "he found a ship going to Tarshish." How easy a thing it often is to carry out an evil purpose! There are always plenty of helps on the way that leads from God. His heart was set on going to Tarshish, and a ship bound for Tarshish he found without difficulty. This may have appeared to him a most remarkable providence, but if he thought so he was soon cured of his error. It is never safe to go by appearances. Many have erred through looking at circumstances instead of at God's commands. No matter about appearances, it is never right to do wrong. The

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Word of the Lord must always be our guide. So far Jonah's plans had succeeded, and believing he had gained his purpose he got on board the ship. But he did not get a free passage.

Jonah pays. "He paid the fare thereof." Missionaries may have too little money sometimes, but Jonah had too much that day, so thought he would have a trip on the Mediterranean. That would have been all right had the Lord sent him there, but it could not be all right when *He* had said "go to Nineveh." But Jonah did not get to Tarshish after all. He paid the fare, but never got the worth of his money; neither does any one who goes away from the Lord. Jonah lost his money when he spent it on his own selfish ends. How much happier he would have been had he used it in the work of the Lord! We fear there are many selfish Christians in the Church; if all they spend on themselves were summed up and placed alongside of what they give to God they would have reason to be ashamed. Our money, if rightly acquired, is a stewardship which we have from God, and for which we must soon render an account. It is not ours to spend as we please. Every coin used selfishly robs God. Many Christians could live at a less expensive rate than they do and have more for the Lord's treasury. An old philosopher said: "My riches consist not in the abundance of my possessions, but in the

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fewness of my wants." "Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long." But Jonah parted with far more than his proper passage money when on the way to Tarshish. The fare is only part of the expenses of a journey; there are always incidental expenses, and sometimes these are heavy. It is a costly thing to travel on the paths of disobedience. Who could reckon up all it cost Jonah to go away from God?

His vain attempt to reach Tarshish must have lost him a great deal of time which ought to have been used in the service of God. Time is more precious than money and not to be frittered away. So brief is the season allotted to us in which we can serve the Lord down here that we have not an hour to squander upon things unprofitable. Let us see to it that we make the best possible use of the passing moments, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Wasted opportunities can never be recalled. Life is full of too lates. Young men, give your life to God for His service, which is life indeed. It is said of Henry Martyn that he never wasted an hour. May we have grace to follow his noble example! Many lose their time in making out plans for the coming years instead of buying up present opportunities. Don't be always singing about the sweet by and by, but begin and do something here and now.

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"Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store;  
Work, for the night is coming  
When man works no more."

Jonah must also have lost his peace of mind, for a man cannot backslide and have an easy conscience. He had fled from the presence of the Lord, but he soon found that it was an evil thing and bitter that he had forsaken Him. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (chap. 2. 8). We do not suppose that he could get away from God as to His omnipresence, but he got out of communion with Him, and so could not be truly happy. A true child of God must dwell in His presence, for there is no real happiness anywhere else. To be severed from Him is worse than death. David said, "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me I become like them that go down into the pit" (Psa. 28. 1). David feared the darkness of a time when the face of God is not to be seen. To be where we cannot pray or hear God speaking to us through His Word is darkness indeed. Many true Christians are in that sad condition through tampering with sin and defiling the conscience. May all such be speedily restored and filled again with the joy of salvation!

### Jonah in a Storm.

"But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in

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the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken" (chap. 1. 4). God has unfailing resources for the discipline of His wayward servants. He has ways of His own of bringing them back to Himself. He sent a storm after Jonah to arrest him on his downward course. This storm is attributed, not to the laws of nature, but to the God of nature. It is not said "there *arose* a great wind," but "the Lord sent out a great wind." God hurled out the wind as if He had been throwing a thunderbolt after His runaway servant. Unbelievers seem to think that the laws of nature may account for everything without God. "The fool hath said in His heart, No God" (Psa. 14. 1). But the Scriptures, in speaking of natural things, continually ascribe them to God. True, He has established laws in nature, but surely they cannot administer themselves. God, who made them, administers them. He maintains, controls, and moves them at His own pleasure. The great wheels of nature are continually revolving in fulfilment of His purposes: "Stormy wind fulfilling His Word" (Psa. 148. 8). But Jonah was the occasion of this particular storm; it came because there was a controversy between God and His disobedient servant. Bad weather overtook him just because his behaviour was bad. The sea must be tossed in tempest to bring this one man back to the paths of duty. It is vain to run away from God. He can soon prepare a storm in

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your life; He can bring a tempest to check you in your career; He can send some great trial that will threaten to swallow you up. Many Christians have to wrestle through life against storm and wind and tide, because of some cherished sin or self-willed course. We do not say that all trials come on account of sin, for the choicest saints have been afflicted. But when trials do come our way we should be deeply exercised thereby as to why God has permitted them. It is of more importance that we should know His will for us than that we should escape the trial. God chastens us for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness. This storm made a lasting impression on Jonah's mind. He gives a most graphic description of it. As we read we can almost hear the whistle of the wind through the rigging and the swish of the huge waves as they break against the sides of the ship, making her pitch and roll until she creaks in every timber. She soon gave signs that she was not chartered to carry such contraband cargo as a runaway missionary. She was so near breaking up that the sailors were afraid, and it takes a lot to frighten sailors. They became so alarmed that they prayed every man to his god, and cast forth the wares into the sea to lighten the ship. The storm was sent to arrest and punish Jonah, but it brought trouble to many others who had no knowledge of his guilt. This

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page of Jonah's history has a living application to many Church troubles to-day. It shows the power of one man to inflict sorrow on a whole community. For one single Jonah the whole crew must be troubled. For one single Achan the whole camp must suffer defeat. For one single hypocrite in an assembly of God's people the whole company must suffer loss; "One sinner destroyeth much good." No evil can be hidden either in our hearts or in the Church of God of which He is ignorant. We cannot count upon His presence and blessing where there is covered up sin. His dwelling-place must be kept holy. May none of us ever play the part of Jonah, for storms are sure to come where Jonah hides: "Be sure your sin will find you out."

### Jonah Sleeps.

"But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep" (chap. 1. 5). One wrong step leads to another. He had passed through terrible stress and strain in trying to get away from his proper work, now the reaction has set in and he sleeps the sleep of sorrow, as the disciples did in Gethsemane (Luke 22. 45). How sad to see the prophet of the Lord neglecting his duty like this! Instead of being away among the masses of Nineveh carrying out his Master's commission, he is down in the sides of the ship fast asleep. In this condition he was a type

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of his people. Israel was intended to be God's faithful witness among the nations, but, like Jonah, sadly failed. It is still one of Satan's devices to lull God's servants to slumber, that they may do no injury to his cause. There is need for constant watchfulness lest we be overtaken by this state of languor in the Christian life. We are passing through a world which has often proved an enchanted ground where pilgrims fell asleep. Jonah asleep represents those Christians who are indifferent to the sins and sorrows and dangers of those around them. He slept when the ship was in danger; he was not only asleep, but *fast* asleep. All the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, and the shouting of the mariners could not arouse him. Amid all that confusion and noise he slept on, yet of all the men on the ship Jonah ought most to have been awake. For a prophet of the Lord to be asleep in such circumstances is strange indeed. A sleeping prophet is more to be dreaded than the storm. May all sleepers in the Church be aroused! It is time to awake out of sleep, because a great many opportunities have already slipped away, and all things demand that Christians should be in earnest.

Jonah ought to have been awake, for every other man on board was awake. The heathen sailors were praying while he was sleeping. They soon realised that this was no ordinary storm, and cried every man to his god. Their

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cries were addressed to gods who had ears which could not hear and hands which could give no help. Jonah believed in the living and true God, but was out of touch with Him at the moment, and so was not in praying mood. The believer who cannot pray imperils the ship. Little wonder the shipmaster tried to arouse him to a sense of his responsibility. It is sad indeed when a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God. The world often rebukes the Church. All around us people seem to be wide awake. Men are all alive in the service of Satan. Christians may well feel rebuked as they see the zeal and self-denial of many in propagating false faiths as compared with their own half-hearted efforts in spreading the Gospel of Christ. Jonah ought to have been awake, because there was plenty for him to do. Every other man was doing his best to save the ship, but Jonah was not doing anything to help. He had gone down into the side of the ship where he hoped he would not be disturbed, like some Christians who seem to have retired from their Master's business and left the work to others. In Jonah asleep we may see a picture of many a Christian, and many an assembly of Christians, who seem quite content to let the heathen perish. They are spiritually asleep to their responsibility in connection with the spread of the Gospel. Indeed none of us are so wide awake as we ought to be. We all need to hear

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again the call of the heathen pilot: "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The cry of the perishing awakened Jonah; may it wake us too, for the cry is the same to-day. Their need appeals to us. "Perishing, perishing, hark how they call us; Bring us your Saviour, oh, tell us of Him."

In Acts 27 we read of another missionary who was caught in a storm, but he was in the path of duty. The Apostle Paul was right with God and did not need to be awakened. He was God's faithful witness on board that ship, and was rewarded with the promise: "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Included in that promise were the centurion who had heard Paul's counsel, but would not believe it; the owner of the ship who would care more for ship and cargo than for Paul or his preaching; the soldiers who advised to kill the prisoners, and the sailors who cunningly tried to escape by pretending to help others. Are they not very like the different characters we meet with in the voyage of life? The unbeliever, the worldly, the careless, the hypocrite. We might think such a crew not worth saving, but it is our business, like Paul, to seek the salvation of all them that sail with us.

### Jonah Confesses.

"And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew;

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and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land" (v. 9). This noble confession marks a turning point in the history of Jonah. The sailors cast lots to find out for whose cause the fierce storm was raging, and the lot fell on Jonah, so they ask him a series of questions. "What is thine occupation?" "Whence comest thou?" "What is thy country?" "Of what people art thou?" In other words: "Where do you come from?" "Where are you going?" "To whom do you belong?" Each question comes tripping on the heels of the former one, indicating at once the hurry, the excitement, and the curiosity of the terrified sailors. Jonah's answer proves that the grace of God was even now bringing him to repentance. He made his confession fully, briefly, and without reserve. There was no attempt to make excuses or cover up his sin, for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them (v. 10).

Not only did he acknowledge his guilt, but he made a clear confession of his faith. He says, "I am an Hebrew," that is, one of God's chosen people, a true child of the covenant. It was a great privilege to belong to the chosen race. How good and kind God had been to these people! He had not so dealt with any nation "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the

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promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9. 4, 5). The fact that Jonah was one of God's people greatly aggravated his guilt in running away and hiding among the heathen. The memory of God's goodness to him ought to have restrained him from sinning. Brethren, we too are the people of God, but in a far higher sense. We are not Hebrews, but Gentiles, brought nigh by the precious Blood of Christ, made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. When we are tempted to sin may we remember whose we are and whom we serve! May the memory of His unfailing faithfulness and goodness to us bind our wandering hearts to Himself till travelling days are done! He said, "I fear the Lord," not "I did fear the Lord in days gone by," but "I am now fearing Him;" "although I have disobeyed my Master's will, I am still His servant." Like another restored backslider he could have said, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21. 17), and like him, too, he will yet be reinstated in His blessed service. He knew Jehovah as "the God of Heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." The knowledge of God's greatness and glory as Creator of the universe ought to have restrained him from sinning. To flee from land to sea to escape the presence of Him who made them both was folly indeed.

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"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me."

Note the effect of Jonah's confession upon the sailors: "Then were the men exceedingly afraid." At first they were afraid of the storm, but now they are *exceedingly* afraid as they see the power and righteousness of God. "When the judgments of God are abroad the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Again they question Jonah. After his noble confession of faith they could not understand why he should run away, so they ask him, "Why hast thou done this?" "Did God deal so unkindly with you that you had no alternative but flight?" "Were you tired of His service?" In seasons of backsliding it is well to have this question pressed upon us: "Why hast thou done this?"

### Jonah Overboard.

"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging" (chap. 1. 15). We now reach the crisis of Jonah's thrilling experiences. Although he had made a confession the sea still wrought and was tempestuous, so the mariners asked him, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" Could anything be more magnanimous than his reply? "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you:

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for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you" (v. 12). His admission that he was the cause of the storm, his command to throw him into the sea, and his acceptance of death as the penalty of his folly all show how true a man he was at heart. He was of a more noble spirit than the Church troublers of these days. We have never yet heard of any of these storm raisers even suggesting that if they were put in the outside place the Church would have peace. No, they generally hold on to the ship and do all they can to get others overboard. Diotrefes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, casteth them out of the Church (see 3 John 9, 10).

But the mariners were very unwilling to throw Jonah overboard. They believe that he is still a servant of the Lord, and feel that it is a solemn thing to have to do with one that God had evidently marked for His own. So they battle with the storm and do everything possible to save the ship, and when at last they must cast Jonah into the sea they pray for forgiveness. They are so much moved by the whole solemn scene that they become, in some sense, worshippers of the true God. The conduct of these sailors is part of the lesson of the book of Jonah. They were only heathen of different nationalities, yet they could be kind to a prophet of the Lord, and their hearts were open to the knowledge of the true God. It was a lesson to

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Jonah himself, and through him to both Israel and the Church.

At last Jonah's hour has come; he must be thrown overboard. We have heard, from those who have witnessed it, that the burial of the dead at sea is a very solemn scene. It is a trying moment when the remains of some loved one, or even a stranger, have to be committed to the deep. All heads are bowed and all hearts are moved as the sea receives another to the dead which are in it. But the scene before us is more solemn still; here we see the burial of the living, a servant of God, a prophet of the Lord, who had disobeyed His will. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging" (v. 15). The storm was over. To the mariners Jonah was dead, and the ship sped on her way. Thus the story would have ended but for the grace of God; but away down beneath the surface God continued the story. His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters.

"Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sovereign will."

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### II.—IN THE FISH.—Jonah Praying.

"Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"

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(chap. 1. 17). We are not certain what kind of fish this was, nor does it matter. It was one which the Lord had specially prepared for its work. The Lord prepared all the instruments for the training of His servant—the storm, the fish, the gourd, and the east wind. God's eye was continually upon Jonah, and He was making all things work together for his good. The Lord knew the very moment when he would be cast overboard, and had the living submarine in readiness to receive him. It was divinely chartered to bring Jonah safe to land again, so there was no danger of accident. God makes no mistakes; His way is perfect. This was God's way of preserving Jonah alive and restoring him again to His blessed service. The belly of the fish was the college in which he was trained for his work as a foreign missionary. In this strange school he learned lessons which he could never forget.

How he felt in his strange abode he tells in chapter 2. This chapter gives a summary of his thoughts and feelings during those terrible three days and three nights. He describes his condition as one of affliction, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord." Who can imagine the terrors of that living grave? He calls it, "The belly of Hell." He felt as one buried alive. He said, "All Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me" (v. 3). He knew when the monster dived to the bottom: "I went down to the bottom of the

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mountains." He felt when it struggled through a bank of seaweed: "The weeds were wrapped about my head." He felt completely hemmed in with no chance of escape: "The earth with her bars was about me for ever" (v. 6). His case was desperate; was ever man in such a plight before or since?

### Jonah Prays.

In his deep affliction he learned to pray. "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly" (chap. 2. 1). He did not pray when he went down to Joppa. He thought he could manage his own affairs then, so he paid the fare but did not ask God's blessing. A little boy was asked why he prayed at night and not in the morning, and he replied, "Because I can take care of myself in the daytime." The Lord put Jonah to bed in the dark to teach him to pray. He often sends troubles to His people to bring them to the throne of grace. But if our trials make us pray we shall yet be thankful for them. We can never be in a worse plight than Jonah was in. He had circumstances to contend with which appeared to extinguish all hope, yet he prayed, and his prayer was answered. "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, unto Thy holy temple" (chap. 2. 7).

### Jonah Trusts.

He learned to trust. "Yet will I look

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again toward Thy holy temple" (v. 7). He thought of the temple because God had placed His name there. There stood the symbol of His presence as a God of love, a God dwelling between the cherubim. He looked to the mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice, and hope revived within him. He knew that God was still "His God." His feelings led him to say, "I am cast out of Thy sight," but his faith triumphed over his feelings, and he said, "I will look again." No man is really cast off from God if he longs after God, and Jonah did long after Him with all his heart. He prayed because he had faith in God, who was merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. He trusted God in the very worst of circumstances, and was not disappointed. All props were knocked away from him, but he leaned on the Lord and found His strength sufficient. May the remembrance of Jonah's experience help us to trust God in the darkest hours and in the sorest trials of our lives.

### Jonah Worships.

He learned to worship. "But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (chap. 2. 9). As Jonah prayed his faith became so strong that his prayer turned to praise. He was not yet delivered, but he believed he would be, so he gave thanks beforehand. If we have a firm confidence in

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the faithfulness of God we will be able to praise Him before we are out of the trial. It was so with Jonah. It has been so with many of God's people since.

When Hudson Taylor and a friend were travelling in China their food supply ran out and they became very hungry, so they asked God to send them the food they so much needed. Shortly after, Hudson Taylor was heard giving thanks for it, and his friend wanted to know where the food was that he was giving thanks for. He replied, "I don't know where it is, but when it comes I'll be ready to begin; but you will have to wait until you give thanks."

### Jonah Delivered.

He learned the power of a new life. "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (chap. 2. 10). How happy he must have been to feel himself again on terra firma. He might have sung truthfully:

"I waited for the Lord my God,  
And patiently did bear;  
At length to me He did incline  
My voice and cry to hear.  
He took me from a fearful pit,  
And from the miry clay,  
And on a rock He set my feet,  
Establishing my way."

Jonah on the rock was a new man. He had been afflicted, but his affliction had been

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blessed to him. He had sinned, but his sins had been forgiven. He had been buried, but raised again. In a figure he had passed through death and resurrection. In this he was a type of Him who passed through the great reality: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12. 40). It was after Christ's resurrection that He commissioned His servants to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. It was through death and resurrection that Jonah became a missionary to Nineveh. Jonah had a new life from God, and a new career of usefulness opened up before him. His wonderful experience had prepared him for new loyalty and obedience to his Master. In mercy God gave him the opportunity of effacing his past disobedience. He was reinstated in service. "And the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the Word of the Lord" (chap. 3. 1-3).

## Behold My Servant.

### The Message of Mark's Gospel.

MARK does not mention his own name in his Gospel. Like Luke and John he so completely hides behind the story of his Lord that it is impossible to glean any information about himself. From other Scriptures we learn that his Hebrew name was John, then, probably after his conversion, there was given to him (or else he assumed) the Latin name Marcus, or Mark. It is interesting to note how he became gradually known by his second name, just as Saul became known by his new name Paul, and Simon by his new name Peter. First it was John, then John Mark, and finally it was Mark alone.

The first reference we have to him is in Acts 12. 12, where we read that Peter came to the house of "Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying." This house was not an ordinary little house like what most people lived in; it had a porch in front of it, and a gate that led into the porch, and a servant named Rhoda to look after it. These particulars indicate a good social position, so that Mark was brought up what we would call "a young gentleman." This house had a room large enough to hold a prayer-meeting in; the passage says, "Where many were gathered together praying." So the house

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of Mark's mother had become the centre of Christian life in Jerusalem. It was here "the large upper room furnished" was. After Peter was delivered from prison he instinctively went there. Perhaps he was a permanent lodger there; in any case, Peter knew Mark so intimately that he looked upon him as his own son, and in writing his first epistle says, "Marcus, my son, greeteth thee." He was probably converted through him.

In the last verse of Acts 12 we have another interesting piece of information about Mark. This is the first mention of him in connection with Christian work: "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." Where did they go to? They went through Cyprus, then they took ship up north to the coast of Asia Minor, and when they landed at Perga probably Mark realised that he was in for more than he intended. It was all very well to be a missionary in Cyprus, the native place of his uncle Barnabas, where he would be among his friends, but to go right into the heart of heathendom with all its dangers was a different matter. His missionary zeal oozed out at his finger ends. He was not prepared to go the whole way; he thought of his comfortable home and returned to Jerusalem.

Another interesting passage in Mark's life

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is recorded in Acts 15. 36-40: "Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Paul and Barnabas differed about how to treat the runaway. His kindly uncle sought to reinstate him in his former position on the second missionary journey. He made a mistake, so Paul refused to comply with his wish. The Church at Antioch had no doubt who was right. They recommended Paul and Silas to the grace of God. This is in striking contrast to the silence attending the departure of Barnabas and Mark. All we are told is that they sailed away to Cyprus; after this they drop out of the story of the Acts of the Apostles. We hear no more of Mark until near the end of Paul's life, when the Epistles to Colossians and Philemon mention him as Paul's companion. So a mistake at the commencement of a man's life need not be fatal. Mark was evidently

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restored to Paul's confidence again. In the very last letter which he wrote (2 Tim. 4 11) he says to Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry." This was reinstating him in his old office, for in Acts 13 5 we read: "They had also John to their minister." Mark was the evangelist who gave us this wonderful gospel record of God's perfect servant. How true it is that "God works with broken reeds, and breathes through them with His sweetest music." Let us take Mark with us, and we shall find him still profitable for the ministry.

Before directing attention to the main theme of Mark's gospel, let me point out a few of its characteristics and peculiarities. Mark is sometimes called the interpreter of Peter. It is interesting to note that he omits things which might have the tendency to Peter's honour, while he tells whatever was fitted to humble him. His sin in denying the Lord is given in fullest detail.

The gospel of Mark was evidently intended for Gentile readers, chiefly Romans, so it translates words which could not be understood by them; for example: "*Boanerges*," "*Talitha Cumi*," "*Corban*," "*Ephphatha*," "*Bartimaeus*," "*Abba*," "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani*." There is little reference to Old Testament prophecy, for those for whom Mark was writing were not acquainted with these Scriptures.

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"Mark's style is rapid, energetic, realistic, pictorial, and dramatic." It is full of graphic touches which prove it to be a transcript from life. Many passages bear the marks of an eye witness. He always notes the effect of Christ's words and works upon the multitude; for example: "They were all amazed" (chap. 1. 27); "They came to Him from every quarter" (chap. 1. 45); "They were astonished with a great astonishment" (chap. 5. 42); "They were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well" (chap. 7. 37); "All the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him" (chap. 9. 15). There is not a dull page in the whole book. We can see the crowds thronging round Christ eagerly listening to all His words, gathering in groups to discuss what they had seen and heard, telling others about Him, etc. Mark's gospel is a very stirring book.

Mark omits some things found in the other gospels. He gives no genealogy, no miraculous birth, no reference to Bethlehem, no adoration of the wise men, no childhood at Nazareth, no sermon on the mount, no sentence on Jerusalem, no promise of the Kingdom to His dying companion.

Mark is the gospel of action. It records deeds rather than words. Christ is everywhere active. The whole gospel bustles with activity. It goes from one mighty deed to

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another with great rapidity. We have in it eighteen miracles, but only four parables.

Mark gives the events of our Lord's life in chronological order. Matthew gives dispensational order—truth in connection with the ages of time. Luke gives moral order—truth according to the soul's apprehension, the order in which we receive it in experience. Take Luke, chapter 5, for illustration; we have first the miraculous draught of fishes, and Peter's confession, "I am a sinful man." Next we have the leprous man cleansed, the palsied man healed and his sins forgiven. Then immediately comes Matthew's call to follow the Lord. Is not this like a chapter of Christian experience? First a confession of sin as guilt, then sin's defilement, and then sin's impotence. When sin is cleansed and forgiven, then the call to follow the Lord; this is what we mean by moral order, but Mark gives the miracles and incidents in the order in which they occurred.

Now note the main theme of Mark's gospel. His purpose in writing is to set forth Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as "the Servant of the Lord," the mighty Worker accomplishing the will of God. The key verse is chapter 10. 45: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." We have seen a picture of an ox standing between a plough and an altar, and underneath the words, "Ready for

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either." This aptly describes our Lord's attitude: He could say, "I come to do Thy will, O God." The business of the servant of the Lord is to fulfil the divine tasks. Mark is the gospel of Him "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. 2. 6). It is the book of the servant, but that Servant is the Son, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." Service and Sonship are inseparable. By sonship we become servants. "The beginning" here refers to the commencement of Christ's official life and ministry. Mark begins the record of Christ's ministry at His baptism. He comes upon the scene at once as the full grown Man, the perfect Servant. The Gospel, as Mark understood it, is the glad tidings concerning Christ; the great facts of His life, works, ministry, death, and resurrection. The Gospel is first of all a series of historical facts concerning Christ; we find the doctrines based upon these facts developed later on in the epistles. At the beginning we have the full title of Christ; Jesus is used in the remainder of the book. His perfection is attested by the Spirit coming upon Him, accompanied by the voice from Heaven, saying, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (chap. 1. 11).

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His perfection is further seen in His victory over His opponents in the service of God. The first opponent mentioned is Satan, "He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan," and it is only in Mark that we read "He was with the wild beasts" (chap. 1. 13). Before David appeared to serve and fight for Israel he slew both the lion and the bear. So the strong Son of God conquered in the wilderness before entering upon His life of service. Adam was given authority over the beasts but fell because of sin, but Christ stood where Adam fell. Have we not in this scene a foreshadowing of that Millennial Day when

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run,"

and under His peaceful sway the fear of beasts shall be removed from men.

Then He overcame the world, as represented by the scribes, who said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils He casteth out devils" (chap. 3. 22). No trace of indignation can be detected in His answer to this hideous charge. His patient heart overflowed in pity for the wicked slanderers. He warned them that their maliciousness was hurrying them on to the sin which hath no forgiveness. Next He overcame His friends who said, "He is beside Himself," and tried to withdraw Him from His path of obedience to the Father's will. His gracious reply

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showed that He could not be turned aside either by avowed enemies or by professed friends: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother" (chap. 3. 21-35). "To do the will of God is My purpose, all who are likeminded prove their relationship to Me." The same elements of opposition exist to-day. If we follow in His footsteps we shall have the same missiles flung at us.

"The world will oppose us, and Satan will rage;  
To hinder our service they both will engage."

Servants of Christ are in as much danger from the low tone of the Church as from the world's opposition. Most of Paul's troubles came from false brethren and fickle friends, but none of these things moved him. He held on his way and finished his course with joy; he could say, "With me it is a small matter to be judged of you or of man's day, for I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

From chapter 1 to 13 we see the perfect Servant at work, preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, and performing miracles of various kinds. This period of His service is beautifully summarised in the words of Peter to Cornelius: "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10. 38). In chapters 14, 15 we see Him obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Then in

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chapter 16 we see Him raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God.

Let me now direct your attention to some of the characteristics of God's perfect Servant. Mark has given us many of these in minute touches, which go to complete the picture he has given of Him:

First He is the

### Toiling Servant.

Mark notes the rapidity with which He passes from one mighty deed to another. His favourite word for conveying this impression of haste and strenuous work is "*Eutheos*," variously translated "immediately," "forthwith," "straightway," "anon." It is found eighty times in the New Testament, and forty of these are in Mark's gospel. You will find if you glance over the opening chapters that it comes in at every turn. Take these few examples from the first chapter: "Straightway they forsook their nets" (v. 18); "straightway He entered into the synagogue" (v. 21); "immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region" (v. 28); "forthwith they entered into the house of Simon" (v. 29); "anon they tell Him of her" (v. 30), and so it goes on through the whole book, a constant succession of rapid acts of mercy and love. "Mark's story pants with haste to keep up with Him as He moves among men, swift as a sunbeam shedding light and healing all

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around." In one day He taught in the synagogue, cast out a devil, healed Peter's wife's mother, and relieved the many gathered about the door. Yet after all this He rose up the following morning, "a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (v. 35). His motto was, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9. 4).

We see in Him toil that puts aside physical wants. Twice in this gospel we read of this. "The multitudes cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread" (chap. 3. 20). There were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. He was at every man's beck and call at the most unreasonable times. When He departed alone that He might seek God in prayer His solitude was broken in upon before it was well begun by the disciples saying, "All men seek for Thee" (chap. 1. 37). Without a murmur or a pause He buckles to the work again, and says, "Let us go into the next towns also, that I may preach; for therefore am I sent" (chap. 1. 38). Mark makes us feel the pressure of the ever present multitude pressing around the Son of God.

Again we see in Him toil prolonged to the point of physical exhaustion. See Him asleep in a boat in chapter 4. 36; it had been a long, wearying day of work, and the hard pillow of

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the boat was a soft resting-place for His wearied head; no wonder that He slept; no wonder that the storm did not wake Him. But it is beautiful to note that, wearied as He was, the disciples cry of "Carest Thou not that we perish?" at once aroused Him. The lips which had been parted in the breathing of wearied sleep now open to utter the omnipotent word, "Peace, be still." Is not this hard work of Christ a lesson for us? Such a life of self-denying service ought to stir us up to imitation and to grateful praise.

II.—He was the

### Retiring Servant.

He always sought to throw a veil of secrecy over His service. In the case of the man who was deaf, He charged him to "tell no man" (chap. 7. 36). In the case of the blind man, He charged him "neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town" (chap. 8. 26). Again, "He entered into a house, and would have no man know it" (chap. 7. 24). "Done in secret" is surely an unfailing mark of service according to God. Particular attention is given in Mark's gospel to Christ's times of retirement. He who would serve much must be much alone with God. To abide under the shadow of the Almighty is to have a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise. After His early cures He withdrew to a solitary place, and there prayed

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(chap. 1. 35). After cleansing the leper He withdrew to a desert place (chap. 1. 45). After the murder of John the Baptist He said to the disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile" (chap. 6. 31). After opposition by the Pharisees He withdrew to the borders of Tyre and Sidon (chap. 7. 24). After predicting His decease He withdrew to the Mount of Transfiguration (chap. 9. 2). After His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He retired to Bethany with the twelve (chap. 14. 3). Mark's account of the Ascension reads like the story of His last withdrawal or retirement from the world (chap. 16. 19).

III.—He was the

### Tender-Hearted Servant.

His whole soul was in His service. He did not offer to God that which cost Him nothing. He saw the multitude as sheep having no shepherd, and was "moved with *compassion*" for them (chap. 6. 34). Of one who came to inquire the way of life it is written, "Jesus beholding him *loved* him" (chap. 10. 21). Again, when He was healing the man with the withered hand He looked round upon the Pharisees and was *grieved* for the hardening of their hearts (chap. 3. 5). Again, when healing the man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, "He looked up to Heaven and *sighed*" (chap. 7. 34). These instances show us how the manifold ills and

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evils of man's state and conduct appealed to the only pure heart that ever beat, and how it throbbed in sympathy with all their woes. His tenderness is further manifested in His words spoken to sorrowing hearts. I can only remind you of two instances; take the case of the man who was in grief because his little daughter had died, Jesus revived hope in his broken heart by His tender words, "Be not afraid, only believe" (chap. 5. 36). These words remain for all who are in a like condition—all whose hearts are sore and hands empty." Then think of His resurrection message to Peter: "Go tell My disciples and Peter" (chap. 16. 7). Why single out Peter, who had denied Him? Why not some of the other disciples who had not thus dishonoured Him? Ah! the Lord knew Peter would be thinking of the time when he fell before the sarcasm of a servant girl and denied he was a disciple. The Lord wished to assure him He would be as glad to see him as any of them. Don't forget Peter.

### IV.—The Humble Servant.

Mark gives more prominence to Christ's touch than any of the gospels. Take a few of the instances for example. He lifts up Peter's wife's mother and the fever leaves her (chap. 1. 31); He lays His hand upon the leper and he is healed (chap. 1. 41); He lays His hand on the dead child and she lives (chap.

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5. 41); He puts His fingers into the ear of the deaf and dumb man, touched his tongue, and said, "Be opened," and the man could hear. He took the blind man by the hand, put His hand upon his eyes, and he saw (chap. 7. 33). He took the little children in His arms, etc. There is surely much to be learned from Christ's touch. It shows His pity. True pity always seeks to get near those who are its objects. The poor leper had felt no touch of a hand for years; according to Mosaic law it was forbidden to any but the priest to touch a leper. So Christ's touch was a priest's touch. He laid His hand upon the leper and he was clean. It shows His humility. Wherever men would help their fellows they must come down to the level of those they wish to aid. We must stoop to contact with the people; get hold of them. He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold.

V.—He was the

### Looking Servant.

Very often Mark tells us of our Lord's looks; these looks had pierced his soul and lived in his memory. On earth, as in Heaven, His eyes were as a flame of fire. How much these looks conveyed would be a study in itself. There are at least seven of them recorded in Mark's gospel; note these three for a minute: In chapter 5 we find Him looking round to see

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who had touched the hem of His garment (v. 32). The woman thought she had stolen the cure. It was all she wanted. But He had more to give her. So He turned and let His eye fall upon her. That look told her she had not been too bold; it told her that He had knowingly given the blessing, and that His heart was in the gift. This was His look of discovery. In chapter 10 we have another case very different. A young man came to Him inquiring the way of life, and Jesus "beholding him loved him" (v. 21). He read him through and through, and loved him with more than an earthly love. Then He spoke some plain things to him; He loved him too well to deceive him with smooth things. If he accepted the conditions, that look told him how welcome he would be, but when he turned and went away sorrowful he left behind him One more sorrowful than himself. This was His look of love. Again, in chapter 11 we have another instance. On the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem He went direct to the temple and looked round about upon all things before retiring to Bethany (v. 11). This scene is a parable of a perpetual truth. He still walks among the seven golden candlesticks to-day. His eyes scrutinise us too. May our language be, "Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Then it will be Heaven upon earth.

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VI.—He was the

### Suffering Servant.

“The Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Think of His sufferings before ever He reached the Cross. See Him in the garden where He said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death;” all the pains of anticipation were felt by Him. He longed to have the cup taken away, if that were possible, but His ruling passion was to accomplish the Father’s will. To add to His suffering the three favourite disciples, Peter, James, and John, fell asleep, so that His sufferings were endured without human sympathy. His question, “Simon, sleepest thou?” shows His disappointment in the one who had boasted so much. He called him by his old natural name, Simon, as if to remind him of what his old life had been (chap. 14. 37). The next ingredient was the betrayal of Judas; he came with a crowd to take Him. He was foremost. What must have been his feelings as he passed into the shadow of the olive trees and caught the first glimpse of Christ? That his spirit was deeply agitated is plain from the fact that he kissed Him so quickly (14. 45). That traitor’s kiss is the symbol for all treachery cloaked under a garb of affection. Then see His sufferings at the hands of the mob. They laid hold on Him; they held Him fast as though He had been a criminal of the worst sort.

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Not only did He suffer at the hands of the mob, but soldiers and rulers alike joined in the mockery. "Behold and see, was ever sorrow like His sorrow?" "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." Then see Him on the Cross. In Mark's narrative of the crucifixion he dwells chiefly on what was done *to* Jesus, and scarcely touches what was done *by* Him. We see the executioners, the jeering rabble, the triumphant priests, and the reviling thieves. One of Mark's peculiarities is in chapter 15, where nearly all the verses begin with "and." In one paragraph we have fifteen of these *ands* in succession, as if to mark the waves of pain and sorrow which broke over His sacred head. The suffering Servant was almost worn out, for they compelled Simon to bear the Cross (chap. 15. 21). That act was not dictated by compassion, but by impatience; they wanted the pace quickened. Next we read of Golgotha; that is where they led the perfect Servant to. Mark records only one of His sayings on the Cross. He is represented throughout as the silent sufferer. But let us not forget that Jesus died not the death of a martyr, but a sacrifice for human guilt; as we saw at the beginning He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. After his death He was laid in a rock-hewn sepulchre, and a stone was laid upon it.

VII.—He was the

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### Exalted Servant.

He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. It was fitting that angel lips should proclaim His resurrection as they did His birth. Note that the angel named His Lord by the names which recalled His manhood, His lowly home, and His shameful death: "*Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified*" (chap. 16. 6). He dwells on the fact that His Lord had been born, had lived in an obscure village, and died on a cross. Then in one word he proclaimed the triumphant fact translated "He is risen," surely the mightiest word ever spoken except by the Lord Himself. The story of the ascension is quickly told by Mark: "He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (chap. 16. 19). It is only in Mark we have these words. Another Scripture says: "A cloud received Him out of their sight." Hebrews says, "He passed through the heavens." Mark adds, "He sat on the right hand of God." The highest place in Heaven is given to God's perfect Servant. He is seen in the restful position, not because He needed repose, but because His work was done. It proclaims again that "It is finished," but before He went away He commissioned His servants to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. He sat down because His work was done. He left His people here because there was still work to do, and as they carried out His orders "He

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worked with them, confirming the Word by signs following" (chap. 16. 20). He is still the active Helper of His people, whether in suffering or in service. Stephen saw Him standing. His attitude was changed to express His swiftness, His readiness to help and sustain His dying servants. So we may still count upon His help till His purposes are accomplished, the number of His elect completed, and then He will come to gather His ransomed ones home.

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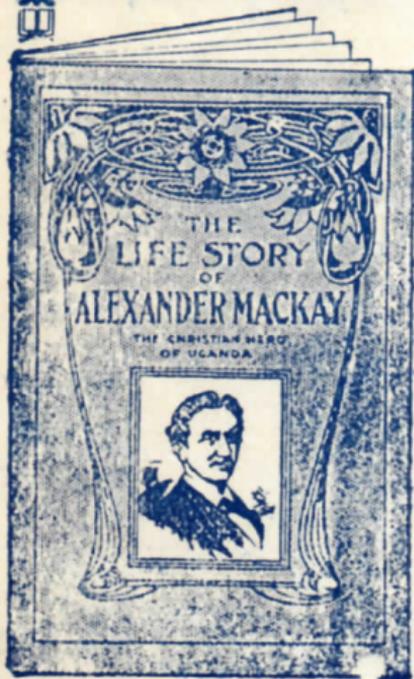
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