

Donald Barnhouse



First Things *First*



ALLIANCE OF CONFESSING EVANGELICALS

Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960), one of the twentieth century's outstanding American preachers, saw the need to spread God's Word to a vast audience, and went on to start a radio broadcast that has become known as "Dr. Barnhouse & the Bible." Dr. Barnhouse is best known for his many colorful illustrations of living the Christian life. His books include *Teaching the Word of Truth, Life by the Son, God's Methods for Holy Living*, and more. He was pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia from 1927 until his death in 1960.

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When Dr. Barnhouse prepared these Bible Study Hour messages for broadcast during the 1961 Lenten season, he intended to expand them into a complete book on the "firsts of the Bible," the priorities which God would establish in our lives. Dr. Barnhouse never completed the book, but we feel you will enjoy having these messages which would have been part of the work he planned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. FIRST, THE LORD	1
2. HE FIRST FOUND HIS BROTHER	10
3. CHRISTIANS FIRST	19
4. LOGS AND SPLINTERS	29
5. HOW GOD EVALUATES MEN	38
6. THE VOICE OF THE RISEN CHRIST	47

FIRST, THE LORD

You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, "And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed." God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness (Acts 3:25-26).

We live in a day when the trivial often takes the place of the important. In all probability there is nothing new about this. Since man first fell away from God, every generation has had its old desires and lusts with which to contend. When our hearts yearn for higher things we soon learn that a force within us holds us back from reaching them. The man who is not born again is without wings. He has the desire to fly, but the downward pull of gravity is greater than any force that he can exercise in the upward direction. He is destined, therefore, to be earthbound in the deepest sense.

ONWARD AND UPWARD

When we have new life in Christ we are given wings, and the power to soar is ours in Christ. But even after we are certain of this

new life, we are aware of forces that pull us down. Paul, who knew the reality of spiritual wings more than any man, was forced to cry out, nevertheless, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not what I want, but I do the very things I hate I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Romans 7:15-23).

Now recognizing these principles, Paul goes on to show us how, in spite of the forces that hold us earthbound, there is a way whereby we can rise and stretch our wings, and go onward and upward in the life that Christ has planned for us. I do not believe that there is any growth without recognizing the principles under which God works. He always puts first things first. Taking our Bibles and looking at the things to which He gives priority, we come to some very interesting conclusions and establish principles whereby we can grow properly. If these principles are not recognized, there may be the appearance of growth, but it will be a false growth, like those cankers which cause some vegetables to sprout to twice their normal size; but with a growth that is like that of a cancer, a wild multiplication of cells that ultimately brings death.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

True holiness comes from following the revelation of God as to which things are first. Take a good concordance and study the word *first*. If we do this, we can arrange the passages in an order that can guide us in our spiritual progress. The most important "first" is the first of the sovereignty of God. This "first" is the object of our present study. Other "firsts" will come later. If we do not put the sovereignty of God as first of all "firsts" we will never enter into the principles of spiritual flight.

I remember, very well, the visit to our home during my boyhood of a member of the United States Cavalry. In that day

there were few automobiles and no airplanes; the Army still used horses, and the Cavalry was a most important and glamorous branch of the service. Our Cavalryman gave me a troop flag, which hung on my wall for some time, "Troop M, 14 Cavalry." One day, in speaking about the relative importance of his branch of the service, he said, "The most important thing in the armed forces is a Cavalry General. After that there is a Cavalry Lieutenant, a Cavalry Sergeant, and a Cavalry Trooper. And then there is the Cavalry horse; then there is nothing followed by nothing, followed by a General in the Infantry." We laughed about it, and I forgot the incident until one day when I was meditating on the importance of various doctrines. What is the most important doctrine? And then I remembered this illustration, and it struck me with great force that *the* most important doctrine in the Bible is that of the *Sovereignty of God*. Our God is God the Lord. Beside Him there is no other God. Now we might say that there is no second doctrine. There is nothing, and then there is nothing after that. There is the Sovereignty of God. And there He is, Lord over all His Creation. After several blanks, since no doctrine can be put in second place to the Sovereignty of God, there come the doctrines concerning the attributes of God, the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then after many more blank spaces, there come the doctrines about which Christians are divided. How should the church be governed? What should be the forms and manners of the ordinances of worship?

It is not strange that Christians should be divided on these doctrines which come so low down on the list of doctrinal importance, that they quarrel over them at the expense of proclaiming the more vital doctrines? Is it not strange? No, it is not strange when we think of our nature and how prone we are to allow things of our atmosphere to drag us downward, even as ice may form on the wings of an airplane and drag it to a catastrophic end.

FIRST THE BLESSING

The verse that best illustrates the point I am making is found

in the third chapter of the book of Acts. Peter was preaching in the temple after the lame man had been healed. He proclaimed the death of Christ and placed the responsibility on His hearers. And then, after nailing down their guilt, he said, "You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'" And then continues, "God, having raised up His servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness" (Acts 3:25-26).

Amazing, isn't it? The Lord Jesus Christ is taken by wicked men and treated shamefully and viciously. They have cried out, "Away with Him . . . Away with Him. Crucify Him . . . We have no king but Caesar . . ." Then they nail Him to a cross, while they rage around Him like bulls excited by the smell of blood. And they sneer and they jeer . . . Yet, within a few weeks, God pours the Holy Spirit upon the little band of believers and sends them back to proclaim peace, pardon and salvation. "God sent Him to you first . . ." What an example of the Sovereignty of God! There, in the very city in which He had been despised and rejected, practically in the shadow of the cross where He had been nailed, He comes back to His disciples to show His hands and His side and to tell them that he does not have anything against them. The angels may have cried out, "They are killing the Son of God," but the Father answers, as He raises Christ from the dead and sends the Holy Spirit to earth, "Go tell them that I love them. Go to them first."

Now the purpose in coming *first* to those who had killed His Son, He states most definitely, was "to bless you." Surely God Himself has established the example according to which all life shall be lived. The Lord Jesus had preached it, and now the Heavenly Father practices it. Christ said, "I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to them who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:27, 28). When Christ Himself becomes the victim of His enemies, God the Father comes to them with good. When they revile and curse, He blesses them, and when they abuse Him, the Father comes to restore them to love and to victory.

The form of the Greek verb here carries great force. It is a present participle, and it cannot be understood apart from a paraphrase. Phillips renders it, "It was to you first that God sent His Servant after He had raised Him up to bring you great blessing by turning every one of you away from his evil ways." It would be even nearer to the original if we could introduce the idea that in the resurrection, the Lord God brought Jesus Christ from the tomb in a procedure that made Christ the source of all blessing. Out of His death comes life, so that His resurrection becomes the fountain of all the blessings that man can ever need. Here is pardon from sin and power over sin. For in turning men away from their iniquities God brings them into the greatest of all blessings. Those who had departed from Him through sin – and that covers all of the race – are now brought back into oneness with God. All of this is sovereign grace. God did it because it pleased Him to do it.

For us, living centuries after the original act of sovereign grace, the wonder lies in the fact that the process has never ceased. The fountain still flows. The blessing which is still available in our day consists in turning us away from our iniquities. We are not blessed *in sin*, but we are turned from sin. When the angel announced to Mary the name that should be given to her Son, it was in similar terms. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

LORD AND SAVIOUR

In one issue of ETERNITY magazine, two writers discussed the question, "Must Christ be Lord to be Saviour?" The subtitle asked, "When a man is born again, is it necessary for him to have Christ as Lord as well as trust in Christ as Saviour?" An American argued that it was possible to be saved by believing in Christ as Saviour without believing in Him as Lord. A Britisher showed that it was impossible to have true faith in the Saviour without at the same time acknowledging Him as Lord. My sympathies lie with the argument of the Britisher. God makes a man alive through the quickening work of the Holy Spirit. In that instant the individual has been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and

that new life must acknowledge who Jesus Christ is and what He has done. That includes the acceptance of Christ as both Lord and Saviour. These two brothers in Christ were arguing in the field of theoretical theology. When it comes right down to practical Christian living, they are undoubtedly in accord.

In my own experience, I passed through many phases of growth. When I was in my late teens, I believed and testified that I had been saved when I was fifteen. Later I remembered the thoughts of my heart when I was eight, and I realized that the life of God was within me by that age. Then I thought back earlier to my fifth birthday, when a man asked me what I was going to do when I grew up. I replied that I was going to preach. Then I asked my mother if I had sung "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so." She replied that I had known and sung this hymn when I was two. I am completely convinced that I was already alive in Christ at that age. The Holy Spirit who indwelt my father and mother had quickened me and made me alive from my earliest consciousness. Now this belief, of course, is based on the utter and absolute conviction that divine life precedes faith. God makes us alive, and with that new life we believe and own Jesus Christ as Lord. My obedience as well as my faith ever soared in increasing parallel spirals. The common center of both faith and obedience was the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was in my heart, and therefore I believe that he was my Saviour. I began to obey Him in some spheres and then in increasing spheres, and soon He was my Lord. In all of my life there was absolute certainty of faith in Christ as my Saviour. This did not keep me from going astray, even as Abraham lied, and Moses was arrogant, and David was hateful and lustful, and Peter was cowardly and stubborn.

During the First World War, when I was in the Army, there was a period when I was completely out of the will of God. There were occasions during this period when I preached faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. But there came a day when He caused me to remember Him. Well can I appreciate the experience of Peter in the light of my own experience. I know what Peter would have said had someone asked of him as he fled from his cursing denial of Christ: "Peter, so you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the

Son of the living God?" Peter, turning in tears to him, would have replied: "I heard the cock crow! I remember His words! I have denied *my Lord*." That is what I would have said, and I did say it in those days of wandering. And throughout all my years, in the ever enlarging spirals of faith and obedience, this process continued. To call Him Lord does not mean that one has arrived at sinless perfection.

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

It is the sovereignty of God which starts us on this road. He has redeemed us, and He brings Jesus Christ forth from the tomb in blessing that turns us from our iniquities. This "turning" is not something that takes us into Heaven in the first moment of our conversion. I am convinced that there is much more analogy in human birth than the theologians have understood. I believe that there may well be a time in the life of each believer when he has already been begotten by the Father according to His sovereign will, and when he has not yet come forth from the darkness of the womb to this mysterious process of the new birth. We must be sure of the fact that when we are brought forth we are alive in Christ. He has become the Saviour, and therefore we believe in Him as such. He is the Lord, and it would be impossible not to acknowledge Him as such, even in moments when we deny Him. For in these moments the heat generated by the terrible friction of the flesh lusting against the spirit burns in our wills to make them more like Christ's will. The metal of the flesh has a high melting point, but it must melt. The new metal of the Spirit cannot be corroded or even flecked by the fires of the flesh. The process goes on and on, and we are ever aware that we were turned from all our wickedness, even from the first moment. And as we come to grips with these wickednesses, our hatred for them grows, our love for Christ grows, our knowledge of God's sovereign grace grows, and we are increasingly aware of the living process of sanctification. A man who does not live in such experiences would do well to consider making his calling and election sure. The Spirit of God is named the *Holy Spirit*, and He cannot be in us other than He is.

That holiness must ever fashion us into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the true meaning of our predestination. God, in His eternal plan, decreed that we should be saved and kept and made holy. We must never forget that our ultimate holiness has a most important part in the eternal design of Him who knows, who decrees, and who ordains all things from the beginning. These verses tell of His eternal purpose to make us holy. "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). "For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things on earth. In Him, according to the purpose of Him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:9-12). "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Oh unhappy the believer who resists this eternal plan for his holiness, for there is the clearly expressed purpose of the sovereignty of God. He brought Christ forth from the tomb and sent Him first to those who had crucified Him. He sent Him with a process of blessing. That process is to turn us from our iniquities and make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. This process will brook no ultimate interference. The believer who will not bend must be broken. This is an inexorable law of spiritual life.

A COMPLETE WORK

There is a verse in Philippians which says two different things in the King James and the Revised Standard Version. The older version reads, in Philippians 1:6, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6). And the modern version reads, "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Now which is

correct? And the answer is—both. For the Greek conveys a meaning that cannot be rendered by a single phrase in English. Its full meaning is that the Lord God who began the work of redemption and conformation to the life of Christ will not only continue it during our early lifetime, but will definitely complete the work at the coming of Christ. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2).

"Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). Thou art the sovereign God, and we praise Thee that Thy plan for us will be accomplished. May we move with Thee and not against Thee.

HE FIRST FOUND HIS BROTHER

He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ) (John 1:41).

The moment a man becomes aware that he has been made alive in Christ there is the urge to let someone know about it. It is as natural as the cry of the newborn infant. If there is no such witness there may be serious question whether there is still birth and not the reality of divine life. It is as natural as the cry of the lover when he learns that he has been accepted by his beloved. If there is no such witness we may wonder if truly there is love there.

COME AND SEE

One of the poignant stories of the New Testament is hidden in the simple words which tell how Simon Peter came to Christ. John the Baptist was preaching in the Jordan Valley. As he was standing with two of His disciples, Jesus Christ walked by. John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). "The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they

said to Him, 'Rabbi (which means Teacher), where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day, for it was four o'clock in the afternoon" (John 1:37-40). Now there is no record of what was said that evening. It must have been like that which John describes when he said, He was "full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14). At all events it is written that one of the two who came that afternoon to Jesus Christ was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

And it is said of him "He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah—the Christ.' And he brought him to Jesus" (1:41-42).

Even before the Lord Jesus told His disciples that if they would follow Him He would make them fishers of men, Andrew witnessed to his brother and landed the big fisherman, Simon Peter. The Lord has given us this story as an indication of a field of witness that is often overlooked. Many who think that they can be used in far fields have never begun where the Lord Jesus meant them to begin — right at home. The last words that our Lord spoke on this earth, while standing on the Mount of Olives ready to ascend into Heaven, were these: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The Lord spoke this word not only in the context of His departure from earth in His body, but also in the context of the disciples' question as to the time of the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. They were thinking of an immediate earthly kingdom founded on the crushing power of the Messiah, which power He will not exercise until His second coming. He was thinking of the spiritual kingdom, the Church, established on the basis of a testimony from heart to heart, thus reigning on sincere conviction founded on the Word of God. The beginning was to be in Jerusalem. They were to speak first to their own brothers. But the Gospel was to go out from person to person, and to the ends of the earth.

There is a very special importance attached to this witness to one's own brother. In order to witness to one's own family there must be a definite change in the former manner of life. At home we are known for what we are. If we would talk to those of our own circle, there must be such a witness to the presence of the new life that they will be struck by the transformation and will be drawn to Christ.

This is the way the majority comes. Oh, it is true that the first generation of believers in any tribe come straight out of heathenism, generally by the witness of some foreigner who has brought the witness to that particular tribe. And so it is that most of church history is the story of some alien who entered a tribe with little knowledge of the language and who preached Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people were saved. Paul, the Greek Jew, took the Gospel to the tribes of Asia Minor, to Macedonia and to Greece. Irenaeus, a Greek, was the first to take the Gospel to Gaul, which is now France. A Latin from Rome, the second St. Augustine, was the first missionary to England, while an Englishman, Boniface, was the first to carry the Gospel to Germany. Young Patrick, of high family, was kidnapped by marauders and carried to Ireland at the age of sixteen, later to become the instrument of the conversion of Ireland. In modern times the list of similar instances crosses the world. Henry Martyn took the Gospel to Hindustan and to Persia. We have Adoniram Judson of Burma; Hudson Taylor of China; Mary Slessor of Calabar; Livingstone of Central Africa and the list goes on until we have Betty Elliott of the Aucas and Wycliffe Bible Translators [taking the Gospel to] many other tribes.

AND YOUR HOUSE

But in spite of all this list, which grows longer every year, these pioneers win but a small proportion of those who come to Christ. The informant who teaches his language to that strange creature, the missionary, usually ends up by coming to know the missionary's Saviour. He has seen Christ in the missionary first of all, and then the informant goes and finds his own brother! That is

a *first* in countless tribes. The God of Abraham became the God of Sarah, Abraham's wife, and then the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Household salvation is a very precious truth, and while there are definite promises which give positive assurance only of the salvation of our children, other statements give us large hope that the Gospel will penetrate throughout our households. We must keep in balance the prophecy that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matthew 10:36), and "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Charles Spurgeon said, "Though grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet doth it very frequently—I was about to say almost always—happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to Himself. He calls an individual and then uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the Gospel net.

"John Bunyan, in the first part of his 'Pilgrim's Progress' describes Christian as a lonely traveler, pursuing his road to the Celestial City alone: occasionally he is attended by Faithful, or he meets with a Hopeful, but these are casual acquaintances, and are not of his kith or kin; brother or child after the flesh he has none with him. The second part of Bunyan's book exhibits family piety, for we see Christiana and the children, and many friends, all traveling in company to the better land; and though it is often said that the second part of Bunyan's wonderful allegory is somewhat weaker than the former, and probably it is so, yet many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former, and it has given to many a loving heart great delight to feel that there is a possibility, beneath the leadership of one of the Lord's Greathearts, to form a convoy to the skies, so that a sacred caravan shall traverse the desert of earth, and women and children shall find their way, in happy association, to the City of Habitations. We rejoice to think of whole families enclosed within the lines of electing grace, and entire households, redeemed by blood, devoting themselves to the service of the God of love."

BEGINNING AT HOME

Now to witness successfully in the circle where we are best known demands certain conditions. If we meet a stranger on the train and talk with him concerning matters of faith he has no way of knowing whether we are living in conformity with that which we are saying. He does not know whether we leave others to do tasks that we should do ourselves. He does not know whether we take overly large portions when others might be hungry. He does not know whether we dawdle in the bathroom while others are waiting. He does not know whether we are quick to defend our proud sensibilities. In short, he does not know whether our life is centered in self or in the Christ of whom we are the witnesses. But our brother knows. These things erect barriers between our brother and ourself, and these barriers may be instinctively transferred by our brother so that they stand between him and Christ. If we are to have an effective witness to those in our own household, we must see to it that Christ becomes Lord of the inmost self, that greatest obstacle in the way of our loved ones.

In the first epistle of John, the beloved disciple begins by explaining the nature of his witness, which is the true Christian witness. We read in 1 John 1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you . . ." (1 John 1:1-3). This is what we must do if we are to be true witnesses. This is what Andrew did when he went *first* to find his own brother. He did not begin with a theological exhortation or with an apologetic argument. He did not invite him to a religious ceremony. He testified to a fact that he knew, and he invited his brother to participate in the experience that he himself had known. He just simply said, "We found the Messiah—that is, Christ." And then we read "he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:41-42).

Now in the case of John, the direct reality of his experience is conveyed with repeated uses of verbs which reveal the speaker's inmost heart. Listen to the list: "We have heard Him." "We have seen Him with our eyes." "We have looked upon Him." "We touched Him with our hands." "We saw that life." "We have seen Him." "We have heard Him." There are seven verbs of personal involvement with Christ. They concern three of the five senses. John had seen, heard and touched Christ. In addition to one of the common verbs for seeing, *horaō*, there is a second verb for looking that describes a close and meditative scrutiny. This verb is used by John when he says, in the first chapter of the fourth Gospel, "We beheld His glory..." (John 1:14). Christ used this verb when He said, "Lift up your eyes and look upon the fields white for harvest" (John 4:35). We can follow John in all of these experiences except that of physical contact. We cannot touch Christ as He bade Thomas and the other disciples to do, but we can see Him with the eyes of the Spirit and we can hear His voice in the Word and in the tones that the Spirit brings to the ears of our hearts. With all our heart, soul and mind we can contemplate Him, meditate on the wonder of His being, think of who He is, remember what He has done for us and realize the nature of the spiritual blessings for us which He has stored up in Himself in the Heavenly places.

I return to the fact that Andrew and the other disciples met Jesus at the tenth hour — four o'clock in the afternoon — and that they spent the night there. What did they talk about until supper time? What were their thoughts as for the first time they saw Christ lift up His eyes to Heaven and thank the Father for the bread which He broke for them? How did they spend the evening? What Scripture did He bring to their minds as they talked together? How late did they stay up talking of spiritual things? Have you ever talked with Christ for a whole evening? I tell you the truth — I know what it is to sit at my typewriter with my Bible beside me and my books around me and to listen for His voice and hear the tones of love, and to feel the heart swelling until one would think that its joy could not be contained. A thousand times I have known it thus, and only when the body becomes cramped or cold does my eye turn to the clock, and I realize, with a start, that

the night is long gone toward morning. And after such a night, one is constrained to go out and find his brother.

SOULS NOT GRADES

When I was a student I had to fill out a report sheet of work done, of hours studied, of the number of gospels or testaments distributed, the number of people witnessed to, and, God forgive us, the number of decisions brought about. I met a fellow student rushing out late one Saturday evening, and when I asked him where he was going he replied that he was going over to the park nearby, to do some "personal work" so that he could fill out the quota he had set for himself! It was quite obvious there had been no true contact with Christ on the part of the worker or with the heart of the one to whom the so-called witness was to be given, and, consequently, no contact between the needy one and the Lord Himself. In fact, the needy one was actually the student who was preparing for Christian work, as it was called, more than the vagrant in the park, for the latter, at least, knew that he was in need, while the student thought that he himself had arrived and that he had it made.

The work that is worthwhile, the work that will pass the test of the judgment fire, the work that is built of gold, silver and precious stones, is the work that is done after spending time with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not astonishing to me that there is no record of what happened that night when John and Andrew stayed with Jesus. Such things cannot be set down in human language. The nearest thing to it all in the Word of God is that spoken by the disciples from Emmaus when the Lord vanished from their supper table: "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). Such experiences must be the prelude to spiritual power. If you pass through such unspeakable glories you will be able to go out and find your brother.

FROM HOME TO THE WORLD

When you have found him, you can think of going farther afield. If you are not able to bring men to Christ in this country you will not be able to reach them in Africa or South America. Crossing the ocean has never made a missionary out of anyone. The uttermost parts of the earth are measured from Jerusalem and not from your home town, and when we measure from Jerusalem, we discover that we are already in the uttermost parts of the earth. Right here we are to hunt for the lost. Christ defined the term neighbor by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. I believe He would define the term brother by pointing to the man who lives nearest to us. I am quite sure of the false emphasis on the so-called brotherhood of man in the spiritual realm, but nevertheless there is a sense in which our fellowmen are to be the recipients of the love of Christ through our hearts, and the touch of Christ through our hands. However, it is not selfish for you to seek, most earnestly, the salvation of your own loved ones. If charity begins at home, so, most certainly, must love of souls. Those who live under our roof have very special claims upon us.

Spurgeon said of this, "God has not reversed the laws of nature, but He has sanctified them by the rules of grace; it augurs nothing of selfishness that a man should first seek to have his own kindred saved. I will give nothing for your love for the wide world if you do not have a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here: we are to 'do good to all men, but especially to such as be of the household of faith;' and so are we to seek the good of all mankind, but especially of those who are of our own near kindred. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Absalom and Solomon, let Andrew first find his own brother Simon, and Eunice train her son Timothy; they will be none the less large and prevalent in their pleadings for others, because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood." The effect I want to give you is a greater love and zeal for those who are nearest your heart by blood ties. The effect follows the cause as the morning follows the night. The compulsion in Andrew that soul-

winning morning followed the night that he spent with the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is the secret of it all: spend time with Christ.

Turn to the Lord and sing with Bishop Moule:

Come in, O Come! The door stands open now;
I knew Thy voice; Lord Jesus, it was Thou;
The sun has set long since; the storms begin;
'Tis time for Thee, my Saviour, O come in!

Alas, ill-ordered shows the dreary room;
The household-stuff lies heap'd amidst the gloom
The table empty stands, the couch undress'd;
Ah, what a welcome for th' Eternal Guest!

Yet welcome, and today; this doleful scene
Is e'en itself my cause to hail Thee in;
This dark confusion e'en at once demands
Thine own bright presence, Lord, and ord'ring hands.

I seek no more to alter things, or mend,
Before the coming of so great a Friend;
All were at best unseemly; and 'twere ill
Beyond all else to keep Thee waiting still.

Come, not to find, but make this troubled heart
A dwelling worthy of Thee as Thou art;
To chase the gloom, the terror, and the sin:
Come, all Thyself, yea come, Lord Jesus, in!

And when this experience has become yours, you will be able to go to your brother and say, "I have found Christ . . . and I have been found of Him . . . All things are new . . . Come with me to Jesus." And you will see Him come.

CHRISTIANS FIRST

In Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians (Acts 11:26).

A few years ago an English writer, Leslie Stephen, declared that "*Christian* has become one of the vaguest epithets in the language." There is no doubt of the fact that there have been many false uses of the name. Nations who have wallowed in abominable vileness have been called "Christian" nations. With the Jews of the western world the name has become almost a synonym for *goy*, a Gentile. In some of the lands that were under colonial domination until a few years ago, the term became synonymous for Englishman, even though the so-called Christian might be a drunken lout living in the wildest perversity.

In the beginning it was not so. The earliest followers of Jesus Christ lived a life that was different from anything that had been seen in the world before. Not even the men who lived under the Old Testament law could produce a life equal to that which came with the indwelling Christ. Abraham was called the friend of God, and David, a man after God's own heart. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the other prophets lived lives that were vastly superior to those

of their contemporaries in the pagan world. Although John the Baptist was the peer of the best of those who had gone before, the Lord Jesus Himself announced that the least in the kingdom of Heaven is accounted greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11). The reason for this is that the Lord Himself dwells in the hearts of those who have passed from death to life; the bodies of the true followers of Jesus Christ have become the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). In the light of this we can understand Jonathan Edwards' statement, "A greater absurdity cannot be thought of than a morose, hard-hearted, covetous, proud, malicious Christian."

We confess at once that multitudes of professing Christians do not fit into the pattern of life traced in the Bible for those who call themselves followers of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to imagine where our text could be applied today in our civilization. For the name "Christian" was not taken by the followers of Christ themselves, but was given to them by those who observed the astounding differences in their lives because they were transformed by the Lord. They gave themselves to Him, calling Him Lord with their mouths and making Him Lord of their hearts.

ANTIOCH

Antioch was a filthy place. In it were great temples to the sun and to the moon. The phallic worship of sex-depravity here found its climax. Antioch was situated on the Orontes River in Syria, and when an orator in the Roman senate wished to describe conditions in Rome, he could find no greater description of the advance of evil in the imperial capital than to say that the Orontes had been diverted so that it now flowed into the Tiber. It was the equivalent of saying that the Hudson River might have flowed into the Thames and given to London the vileness of Manhattan.

Barnabas, who brought the gospel to Antioch, was a Levite, born on the island of Cyprus. His original name was Joseph, but the apostles nicknamed him Barnabas, "son of encouragement." It is wonderful to have such a man in your company. So many people hang back and peer at all the difficulties that may confront a

professed course of action. So many people talk all around a subject, hesitate to increase the budget, decry forthright means and act as counselors of despair. Others seem to delight in dragging their feet and watching for failure so that they can say, "I told you so." Barnabas was just the opposite. This son of encouragement would say, "Sure, we can do it! Let's go ahead! Why Wait? Now is the time! Just let each do his part." Barnabas could have originated the phrase, "God and one is a majority," for he put himself into the hands of God without reservation.

At first mention of him in the book of the Acts, the early church was finding itself. The power of the grace of God was upon the people. We read in the book of the Acts, "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:34-37). Thus, from the very beginning, the Holy Spirit singled him out as the ringleader of self-sacrifice, the example of devotion, the champion of surrender, the primate of love. He was picked out by the church at Jerusalem to go to Gentile country and investigate the report that the gospel had broken through racial barriers and was beginning to flood the Gentile world. Here was a man who by race could have been a hide-bound nationalist, holding to nothing beyond the tradition of the elders. But we discover that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Barnabas was a broad-minded, level-headed man who put spiritual values ahead of bigotry and tradition. We read, "News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; for he was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company

of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (Acts 11:22-26).

This paragraph shows us that Barnabas was a man who could be trusted by a group of people like the early church in Jerusalem. He was free from jealousy and self-seeking, for when he saw that the Lord had worked through somebody else he was glad. He encouraged the babes in Christ to remain faithful to the Lord. Further, it is stated that he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit. Finally, it is revealed that he was not suspicious of Saul's conversion, for not only did he know that Saul had been zealous in the religion of his fathers, but now Saul, having been touched by the grace of God, was devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul was not yet known as Paul, and he had not yet written an epistle or begun his missionary journeys. Barnabas was not dismayed by Paul's past, but sought him out and brought him to Antioch because there was a church to be strengthened in the Lord.

Their labors issued in the salvation of a considerable group of people. In Antioch, known for degradation, God began such a work in the lives of the people that observers realized at once that here was something new. The believers called themselves by several different names. But somehow the unbelievers understood that the difference in these people was caused by their faith in Christ, and they, the unbelievers, called them Christians. It must be realized that the Jews did not give them this title. The word *Christ* means Messiah, and the Jews would never have called the followers of Jesus the followers of the Messiah, because they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. This word *Christian* is remarkable, for it conveys first the Hebrew idea of Messiahship; second, it is a Greek word; and finally its suffix is a Latin form for an adjective. The word *Christian*, then, is somewhat like the inscription that was over the cross of Christ in three languages. Let us now turn to see what these people, whose lives had been transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ, called themselves. They knew they were different, they knew that they had a new life and they knew how it came about. If we look through all the New Testament we discover they called themselves by several different names: disciples, saints, believers, brothers, witnesses.

DISCIPLES

First, the early believers accepted the title that was bestowed upon them by Christ Himself. They were disciples. They were not known by any other name while Christ was on earth. This title is found frequently in the Gospels, a few times in the book of the Acts, but never after that. The word *disciple* gives us the idea of learners, those who follow a teacher. But after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit dwelt in them in His fullness, they acquired deeper, fuller names. They felt themselves no longer followers of a teacher, but saints, made holy by the redemptive work which placed them in Christ; believers who had entered on the life of faith; brothers in relation to other believers, and witnesses to the unbelievers around them. But the idea inherent in the word *disciple* is not weakened but rather fortified by the names that came after. Certainly if I am a saint and a believer, my concept of the Lordship of Christ will be strengthened, for I believe that the disciples of Jesus did not have the highest view of Him until after His resurrection. Then their discipleship was heightened to saintliness, their hearts possessed more solid faith, their love overflowed to all others who knew Him, and their witness went abroad to those who did not know Him.

SAINTS

The second title, the *saints*, is a divine one, bestowed upon them by the Lord. Let us lift this whole scene out of the first century and bring it down to ourselves. We, who have been born again and have been partakers of the divine nature, are called saints by God. This is our title, and we must not allow it to be obliterated by adulteration of its meaning, or by using it to describe a much lesser thing. I am a saint just as much as Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Saint Chrysostom or any others in church history. And if you are a believer, so are you a saint. The church does not make a saint; rather, the collectivity of the saints makes the church. God reaches down to a man who is in the depths of sin, whether immoral sin or in moral sinfulness, and He takes all of his sin and

places it upon Jesus Christ. He deals with that sin in the death of the Saviour and then places His own divine righteousness to the account of the sinner. In that moment God makes a sinner into a saint. The saint still possesses the old nature and still commits sin; nevertheless, he is a saint. The reason for this seeming anomaly is that God is looking at the individual through Christ, and the word *saint* applies only to the person's position in Christ.

The Greek word that is translated *saint* in so many places is the exact word that is translated *holy* in several hundred others instances, including all those in which the word is part of the divine name of the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit (who in French, Spanish, Italian and other Latin languages is called the *Saint Spirit*—Saint Esprit) creates new life within the sinner, and thus makes him a partaker of the divine nature and establishes him as a saint. This work is instantaneous, and from then on his entire life is directed toward conforming him to the high position which became his in the first moment of his salvation. May every believer in Christ bow humbly before these divine teachings and pray, "Lord, Thou hast made me holy and called me a saint; work in me so that I may become more and more saintly in Thine own holiness."

BELIEVERS

The third title by which Christians called themselves is *believers*. This name does not apply to our heavenly position but rather to the character of our union with Christ. If this were truly understood it could transform the methods of evangelism. Instead of pleading with the human will to do God and self the favor of accepting Him, the sinner would be confronted with the finished work of Christ and told that God says that this work was done for the sinner.

Let me summarize how I deal with anyone concerning salvation. You will note that I never speak of accepting Christ, or of giving one's heart to God, or of any other act of the will. Sit in my study and listen as I talk to a man who comes in. "I have great good news for you. God says that Christ died for you. God says

that He doesn't have anything against you. God says that your sins were dealt with by the death of the Saviour. God says that you are lost and under His curse, but that you don't have to remain that way. God says that you do not have to deal with His justice. You do not have to face Him in judgment. God says that He loves you and that He has broken down all the barriers between you and Him so that you may come to Him boldly on the ground of His grace." That is what I tell a person to whom I am presenting the gospel. I never say, "Will you accept Christ as your Savior? Will you give your heart to God or to Christ?" When I so present the good news, I get either of two reactions. One is: "I don't get it." "I don't understand it." "I can't see it." "It doesn't say anything to me." "It's a lot of foolishness to me." I have seen that reaction quite a few times, but the other reaction I have observed scores of times. The person looks at me in wonder, almost stupefaction. And then comes the dawn of great comprehension, and then the person says: "Why . . . then . . . that means that I am saved!" "That means that I have eternal life!" "God says that He is satisfied with the death of Christ instead of my death . . . Then—then I am saved!" To the person who rejects the gospel, we are what Paul calls "a savor of death unto death." But in the second instance we are "a savor of life unto life." Analyze the two reactions. The difference is very simple. When I presented a certain set of divine-revealed facts, the first man said, "I don't believe them. I don't apply these facts to myself." The second individual simply says, "I believe what God's Word says." And that instant he is classified as a believer. You will note the great difference between this and the language that is so popular in many evangelistic meetings, and so biblically false. I have presented biblical truth to an individual who believed the truth and thus became a believer. I, of course, am convinced that the individual believed because the Holy Spirit made him alive in Christ, and that the act of believing flowed out of the new creation, and not from the old nature of Adam. As soon as this occurs, the individual knows that he is a believer, and he understands that others who have accepted the facts of divine grace are also believers. And this is one of the early names that the followers of Christ gave to each other.

BROTHERS

Now in the fourth place, these early Christians called themselves brothers, but the title had no reference to a relationship that was universal in humanity. There is not even the remotest evidence in the Bible to establish any such doctrine as "the universal brotherhood of man." The Bible shows us, at the gate of the Garden of Eden, that there was a natural brotherhood between Cain and Abel, which ended in the murder of Abel. This is the universal brotherhood of man that is often claimed by those who are not believers in Christ. But true brotherhood is supernatural and selective. It is not based on natural generation but on supernatural regeneration. It takes a man from the Cain-Abel relationship to the David-Jonathan relationship. It is a supernatural bond based on divine love. I was a sinner, who should have been judged and banished by God, but He saved me and gave me new life, and all this is the result of His free-flowing grace. Immediately, the Holy Spirit who dwells in me and in this man draws closer to Himself and draws the two of us to each other because we are both objects of this grace of God. Here is the explanation of that verse in the epistle of John: "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14).

This life within us, relating itself to the same life in all other believers, constitutes the basic relationship that forms the true church. The neglect of this relationship causes differences between believers. Until we know each other as brothers in Christ, we cannot obey the Word of God in such distinct commands as, "In honor preferring one another . . ." (Romans 12:10). "Each esteeming the other better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). "Love one another" (John 13:34). Christ urged those who followed Him to love each other and to fulfill all these admonitions to oneness that should characterize brothers in Christ.

WITNESSES

Now in the last place, the early Christians called themselves witnesses, and they were so called by the Lord Jesus Christ. This

title indicated their relationship to those around them in the world. Among themselves they were brothers, but to the unbelievers they were witnesses. This phase of their life was revealed by the very last words spoken by Christ on earth. Just before ascending to Heaven He said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As they moved, they spoke; and men listened to their words. As they walked, they lived; and men watched their lives. A French writer observed that the true calling of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way. The most trivial things can be accomplished in a noble, gentle, regal spirit which overrides and puts aside all petty, paltry feelings, and elevates all little things.

The Greek word for witness is *martus*, and the derivative, meaning "to be a witness, to give evidence," is *martureo*. From this comes our English word *martyr*. It shows us how the first witnesses stood for the truth that had become their life, even to the point of giving up that life. One ancient writer, Arnobius, tells us that the martyrdom of believers first of all made the onlookers seriously inquisitive into that religion which could endure the mind with so much strength and overcome the fear of death. But there are many whose martyrdom is simply a long, long living witness, unknown to us, but known to God, and fulfilling His purposes. We must be careful to maintain our witness, for this is the command of our Lord who said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Finally, there is a sense in which all these qualities, virtues, names and titles are summed up in the word which the world gave to them—Christians, the men of Jesus Christ. It is a sad and sorry thing that through the centuries those who have born the name have rubbed away its brightness until, like an old Roman coin, the effigy has become unrecognizable and the inscription is illegible. We must praise God that He has given us the possibility of fresh minting, day by day, so that we may become more like Him. Then the world, seeing us, will find His inscription in us and will read

the inscription that we belong to Him and that He is receiving all the glory through our lives.

LOGS AND SPLINTERS

First take the log out of your own eye (Matthew 7:5).

The Lord Jesus Christ certainly had a sense of humor. What is a sense of humor? The Oxford Dictionary defines it thus: "The faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous . . . or of expressing it." The dictionary further states that humor is distinguished from wit, as being less purely intellectual, and as having a sympathetic quality in virtue of which it often becomes allied to pathos." James Russell Lowell, in *My Study Windows*, says, "Humor in its first analysis is a perception of the incongruous." With such a definition we can certainly say that the Lord had a sense of humor. A camel in a bowl of soup (Matthew 23:24), pearls before swine, figs from thistles, the blind leading the blind.

Above all, this sense of the incongruous gives fire to our text. Christ pictures one man rushing up to another and saying, "Oh, you poor thing, you have a splinter in your eye! Let me help you take it out!" And everyone sees that the man who offers this help has a log sticking out of his own eye. The full text reads as follows: "Why do you see the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but do

not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:3-5).

I have adopted the words splinter and log because modern scholarship has established their meaning from the classics and the papyri. The German scholar Wilhelm Dittenberger has given us the entire account-book of a Greek temple in which all purchases were listed, together with the prices paid. Among the items were listed great beams, on which the ordinary boards were laid. Our New Testament word dokos is used for these beams and the price paid for them was so great that we know they were large. We use the word log rather than beam, because the younger generation, hearing of someone with a beam in his eye might mistake it for a gleam in the eye. The picture set before us is a humorous one, but akin to pathos because it is such a revelation of a common characteristic of human nature and because it calls forth such judgment from our Lord.

It is very easy to see the faults of our neighbors and very difficult to see our own. This text is rarely preached upon, perhaps because it probes the heart of the speaker. In my library I have shelf after shelf of bound volumes of sermons, a hundred and fifty volumes of a series begun in England in 1870 and another fifty volumes of a series begun about the beginning of my own lifetime. There are more than 100,000 pages in these encyclopedia-size volumes, and a careful search of the indexes shows only one sermon on the text, preached by the Vicar of Wighill, in Yorkshire, in 1892, and that of comparatively little use.

HOUSECLEANING

The words of the text are so simple that anyone, even a child, can understand them without explanation. Since this is so, it is all the more important to look at them carefully so that their apparent simplicity will not cause us to pass them by. The idea might be

reduced to the statement that we are to set our own house in order before we attempt to do it for someone else.

Our text is found in the Sermon on the Mount, and we may begin by asking ourselves why Christ gave these ethical truths. Through all His early years He had lived a life of simplicity among His neighbors. He saw them through divine eyes, and He saw them through human eyes. He was the God-Man. Even when some began to follow Him, "He did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25). This statement shows that Christ saw past all outward form and pretense. This is why He could speak as He did, and why His words carry such acid. But at the same time, He was love. He came to take our humanity that He might transform it like unto His own, the only perfect humanity, and this is why His words carry such healing balm.

Christ knew that people commonly talk about people. Neighbors talk about neighbors, and almost always, such talk has a shade of malice. The Hindu proverb says, "The whisperer is a liar," and "The snake bite is like a needle when it goes in and like a plowshare when it comes out." The Malgash says: "Scandal is like an egg; when it is hatched, it has wings." In Kenya, Africa, the Kikuyu say, "Gossiping and lying are brother and sister."

What do people commonly talk about? Someone answers, "I am interested in people; you are rather nosy; she is a dirty gossip." Or, "I just tell the truth about people; you make a lot of nasty remarks; he is a back-biting scandal-monger." I have heard people twit bald men on their baldness, stout people on their fatness, even cripples on their infirmity. And when someone has a reverse of fortune there are those who are quick to say, "He had it coming to him!" or, "She deserved every bit of it!" or, "It served him right!" There seems to be in human nature a savage desire to hurt others. This is manifested to the extreme in nicknames that are given to people. Almost two hundred years ago, William Hazlitt said, "A nickname is the hardest stone that the devil can throw at a man." Walter Savage Landor wrote, "Nicknames and whippings, when they are once laid on, no one has discovered how to take off."

CARRYING NEWS

Jesus Christ says that those who follow Him are to have no part in this filthy traffic between mouth and ear. For the ear is as much a part of this evil as is the mouth, and it is the heart that connects the two. There is some mathematical logic here that needs to be set forth. A man tells a lie and another man criticizes him for it. The Lord tells us that the lie is a splinter and that talking about it is a log. A woman falls into grievous sin and commits adultery. Someone finds it out and begins to talk about it. The Lord calls the adultery a splinter, and talking about it, a log. This would seem to be a new form of mathematics, and perhaps there is a good explanation for it. The Lord said that His ways were not our ways and that His thoughts were not our thoughts. He also said that His ways and thoughts were as much above ours as the Heavens are above the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9). How logical is it for Him to rate criticism a worse sin than the sins it criticizes?

Perhaps we could find an analogy in the story of the woman who cast her two mites into the treasury. At the same time, wealthy people giving large sums were there. "And he [Jesus] called His disciples to Him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living" (Mark 12:43-44). Certainly Christ was not claiming that two pieces of money, each worth less than an eighth of a cent in our currency, was a larger sum than thousands of shekels being cast into the temple treasury. The answer is that He was not using the mathematics of the adding machine, but the mathematics of the heart. This is more advanced than the study of conic sections of calculus. If we compare mites and notes, we come up with the conclusion that the important thing is the motive that prompts a person. He knew the motive of the woman who gave her all. And the solemn thing is that He knew the motives of those who were guilty of criticism, backbiting and slandering. Such people always speak from ignorance, for they do not know the motives which prompt people.

Some time ago I heard of a man who was an elder in a certain church which allowed its contributions to be published. This man's contributions were comparatively small, and there were those who severely criticized him because they knew that his income was about a thousand dollars a month, while his contributions to the church amounted to not more than two or three hundred dollars a year. The critics whispered rather loudly that he should not be on the session because the smallness of his gifts showed a greedy spirit. Since he did not live ostentatiously, his detractors said that he must be storing it up in stocks and bonds. When his will was probated, after his death, it was discovered that he left practically nothing, that he had been paying more than a hundred dollars a week for many years to support an insane sister in a private asylum.

CARPING CRITICS

It is also certain that mote-seekers are professional reformers. They have given themselves a D.D. degree ("doctrine detective"), and they go to church only to discover whether or not the minister is orthodox. They snatch at the least straw of deviation and blow it up to an apostasy. They stir up trouble and start division. Such a man tells people that faithfulness to Christ demands that they join him in criticism, and he condemns his target with continuing and increasing venom. They study of psychology and psychiatry is still in its infancy, but we are learning certain things about abysmal recesses of the human spirit that make it possible to understand the professional reformer, the mote-finder, and the doctrine detective. Very often their work is a cloak to cover hidden desires, a defense mechanism, or an effort to build themselves up by tearing others down.

There is an old proverb current among the Kashmiri, "The dogs bark, but the caravan passes." The critic, the gossip, the backbiter does not realize that his yelping classifies him with the pack, and not with the procession. In psychology this is called a "transfer." The man who looks at motes in another can avoid looking at his own logs. It is understandable, then, that the Lord Jesus called such people hypocrites. Why were they attacking

others? Does such criticism arise because there is profound grief over sin? Is the critic moved by the fact that God is outraged and that great wrong is done? Actually, the critic has no sensitivity for sin at all. If his accusations of his neighbor are discovered to be false, and the neighbor is innocent, the critic looks for something else to criticize. Nor is it because of a great love for the neighbor that the critic makes his accusations and carries his tales. Love covers a multiple of sins. Love does not expose sin. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love does not fail. Since we see that there are no positive motives for the criticism, and since the Lord says that the critic is a hypocrite, it follows that the critic is moved by envy, jealousy, selfishness, and all other evil motives that put the poison sac of the asp under the human tongue (Romans 3:13).

"BEWARE LEST YE FALL"

The critic should also understand that everything he says is ultimately coming back upon himself. "Curses are like young chickens; they always come home to roost." Alexander Maclaren has well illustrated this. He said, "A carping spirit of eager fault-finding necessarily tinges people's feelings toward its possessor, and he cannot complain if the severe tests which he applied to others are used on his own conduct. A cynical critic cannot expect his victim to be profoundly attached to him or ready to be lenient to his failings. If he chooses to fight with a tomahawk, he will be scalped some day, and the bystanders will not lament profusely. But a more righteous tribunal than that of his victims condemns him. For in God's eyes the man who covers not his neighbor's faults with the mantle of charity has not his own blotted out by divine forgiveness.

"This spirit is always accompanied by ignorance of one's own faults, which makes him who indulges in it ludicrous. So our Lord would seem to intend by the figure of the mote and the beam. It takes a great deal of close peering to see a mote; but the censorious man sees only the mote, and sees it out of scale. No matter how bright the eye, though it be clear as a hawk's, its beauty is of no

moment to him. The mote magnified, and nothing but the mote, is his object; and he calls this one-sided exaggeration 'criticism,' and prides himself on the accuracy of his judgment. He makes just the opposite mistake in his estimate of his own faults, if he sees them at all. We look at our neighbor's errors with a microscope, and at our own through the wrong end of a telescope."

The New Testament everywhere proclaims that the Lord cannot effectively work in us if we do not forgive others. It is therefore imperative that we face this problem and take a sharp and severe inventory of our state of mind. If we have an enemy, is it our fault? Have we forgiven any and everything that he may have done to us? Have we gone the second mile to overlook incidents that we might have considered slights?

Job lost everything material that he possessed, his body was afflicted with boils, and, to make it worse, his wife nagged him. On top of it all, his so-called "comforters" came with hollow arguments and vapid meanderings until God intervened, saying, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). After the divine revelation, Job began to pray for those who had despitefully used him, and it was then that the Lord turned his captivity and "gave him twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

LIVING FOR CHRIST

In the light of all this, it is most important that we consider our conduct, keep our tongues yielded to the Lord, and do everything that we possibly can for the good of those whom we think have done us evil.

We must begin by applying all of this to our own selves. We must follow the conduct of the disciples in the upper room. When the Lord announced that one of them would betray Him, they did not let their curiosity take over. Not one of them asked, "Lord, is it Peter?" "Lord, is it Andrew?" "Lord, is it Thomas or James?" Rather, each asked the profound, soul-searching question, "Lord, is it I?"

The disciples were in the presence of that all-holy light, the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no place in that upper room for any

curiosity which would be, at the same time, a declaration of innocence. In every heart there was the certain awareness of the possibility of guilt. Unhappy is the Christian who does not know the treachery of his nature. "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). When we realize that we are capable of these deep, hypocritical sins, we can come to the Lord, ask Him to cleanse us and give us the positive asset, an ever-growing love for Himself, that will make it impossible to go about picking splinters from the eyes of others. If we love Him, we shall be occupied with Him. A man who truly loves his wife is not going to spend his time examining the flaws in another woman's face. A man who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ is not going to be concerned about the actions of others. We expect nothing from unbelievers, and therefore we are not astonished when their quiz-shows are rigged. We expect everything from Christ, and we are delighted when we see Him at work in fellow believers. We read in Ephesians how Paul burst into praise at the news of another group of believers. "Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:15, 16). To the Philippians he says, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5).

When the heart is filled with love for the Lord, here will be growing love for all who belong to Him. When we begin to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and as we love our Lord, our tongues will be employed in prayer for them, and in delight that the Lord is working in their lives, and we glorify Him for what He is doing. Then He looks at us and says, "With the same measure that you measure to others, I will measure out to you." And suddenly we discover that our cup is running over.

When the lumbermen began their great logging operations in the north and west of our continent, they soon learned that the logs had to be floated down the stream to the mills that were built nearer the centers of civilization, where their lumber could be used. During the spring floods they filled the streams with great

timbers, and occasionally there was a log jam. The most expert of the rollers took over, and leaping nimbly from log to log they broke the jam and started the whole cut running down the stream. If you discover that there is a log jam in your own eye, remember that the Lord counseled the church of Laodicea to secure from him, "salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see" (Revelation 3:18). The salve of His love will take the beam out of your eye. Then you will see Him, and all others will become the objects of your love in Him.

HOW GOD EVALUATES MEN

But many that are first will be last, and the last first (Matthew 19:30).

Very few have ever heard of George Philipp Telemann, nor had I, until I found mention of him in the *London Times*. Turning to reference books, I was a little astonished to find no major listing for him in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, but I found it in the *Oxford Companion to Music*. In his time, he was considered to be the most important musician in Germany, if not in Europe. Born in 1681, Telemann lived to be eighty-six. When he died in 1767, he left behind him a tremendous volume of musical scores — forty operas, more than forty settings of the Passion, and more than 600 overtures. By all odds, he was first. Only two contemporary musicians, Johann Hasse and Karl Graun, could compare with him in the minds of the people of his day.

When Telemann was four years old, a baby was born in Eisenach, Germany, who also grew up to be a musician. He wrote many works and achieved some fame in his time, but he was little known beyond his small circle. The *Oxford Companion* says of the

second man, "After his death the trend of musical interest was in such a direction as temporarily left his works on one side." Yet, this contemporary of the famous Telemann, this man whose music was forgotten for almost a hundred years after his death, was none other than Johann Sebastian Bach. Today we consider him one of the greatest musicians who ever lived, and his name is known wherever there is music in the western world. Yet, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us that when his son Johann Christian Bach was playing in London years later, everyone knew the son, and "report said that his father had been a great musical scholar."

THE LAST FIRST

Here, in the musical world, is a remarkable illustration of the last who was first, and the first last. Now, almost three hundred years later, the last has been proven to be truly first. Telemann, who was lauded then, is forgotten now, but Bach, who was ignored by the so-called superiors of his day, has become one of the shining glories of our musical world today.

The Lord Jesus Christ announced this principle for the spiritual realm: "The last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16). To understand His meaning, we must look well to the fact that the text is repeated with fifteen verses in between. Unfortunately, this is largely obscured by the fact that the man who divided the New Testament into chapters took his pencil up at this point and made a mark announcing chapter twenty. Actually, two parables are joined to each other by our texts, and we must see the relationship.

Let me summarize the narrative at the end of chapter nineteen and the beginning of chapter twenty. The Lord announced that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven. This was said right after the rich young ruler had left Christ, sorrowing, because he had great possessions. When the disciples wondered at Christ's sweeping statement, He answered that, nevertheless, with God all things are possible. Then Peter, with one of his customary bursts of pride and misunderstanding, blurted out that in contrast to the rich young

ruler who forsook Christ for possessions, they, the disciples, had left everything to follow Christ. What will we get in return, Peter asked. Christ announced that they would sit with Him in the Kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and that anyone who had left anything for His sake would receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life, but that the first would be last and the last first.

At this point there is the chapter division, but we must press on. Chapter twenty begins with the word "for," or, "because." No one who sat with me in our Princeton Greek classes will ever forget Professor Machen telling us that we were never to forget "the force of *gar*," the Greek word used to express cause or continuation. It ties the next parable to Christ's statement that the first will be last and the last first. This parable is that of the workingmen who were in the market place. The householder went out at early light and hired some of them at a denarius for the day's wages. We will call it ten dollars. At about nine o'clock he went out and hired still others, without fixing their wages. At noon, and at three o'clock he did the same thing. At five o'clock still others were approached in the market place, and they said they were there because no one had hired them. He sent them also into the vineyard. When the sun was about to set, the laborers gathered to be paid. Those who had worked only one hour came to him first, and he handed each of them a ten dollar bill. Then he handed each of the earlier group a ten dollar bill. Finally those who had worked all day, and who had agreed to work for ten dollars, came, expecting him to give them more because they had worked all day. But he gave each man ten dollars, and when they grumbled he said to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for ten dollars? Take what belongs to you, and go; I choose to give to the last as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" And when Christ had spoken this parable He concluded, "So the last will be first, and the first last."

If we do not consider the whole sweep of this narrative, we are liable to miss the point, as I believe many commentators have. Great and honored Bible teachers have written that this parable teaches the wisdom of making no bargains with the Lord. We enter

into His service, and we trust Him to do whatever He wants to do, knowing that He is always right. We joyously anticipate the evening and know that He will be generous, and those who work the entire day have the joy of having worked for Him all day. I know personally that this is true. The Lord gave me the inestimable advantage of having known since childhood that I was called to serve Him. I have recounted, elsewhere, how when asked on my fifth birthday what I was going to do when I grew up, I answered that I was going to preach. I have never in my life had any other thought and have never swerved from that goal. I know the Lord well enough to be sure that if He saves someone at the age of seventy and allows that one to labor for a year or two and then gives him as much reward as I would obtain, I have no complaint whatsoever to make. It is so wonderful to have lived with Him long enough to be certain that "He does all things well" (Mark 7:37).

Many illustrations could be used to show that someone coming late in life may do far better and far more than someone who has spent his entire life at the work. This is true in many fields. From the classics we have the story of Cincinnatus, for whom our city of Cincinnati is named. In 458 B.C., according to tradition, when Lucius Minucius was besieged by the Aequi on Mt. Algidus, Cincinnatus, although over seventy, was called from his fields where he was plowing to be the dictator of the Roman forces. He defeated the Aequi, freed Minucius, resigned his dictatorship after sixteen days, and returned to his plow. Moreover, he accomplished what other generals had endeavored to do and had failed miserably. We also can imagine cases where a man comes late to a task and does a much better job than those who have labored long at it. A specialist may be called to see a patient whose doctor has had his case for months, and the specialist may cure the man in a week. A Paul can come to the apostleship long after the twelve and may do more than all of them combined. We can multiply instances of this type as long as we like, but we have still failed to reach the heart of the parable. We may come to it, I think, by analyzing what Christ said to Peter. When the Lord answered Peter's inquiry, "What shall we have?" He spoke in terms of the Apostles' future place in the kingdom, ruling over Israel. But

at once He said that all who had left anything for Him would receive a hundredfold.

THE ELEVENTH HOUR

The Jews are those who worked from the first hour, for these people were called to labor for Him from the dawning. They agreed to a covenant and were promised certain rewards. There was no place for the Gentiles, who were standing idly in the market places of the world, "Godless, hopeless and Christless" as we are told in the epistles (Ephesians 2:12). And yet the Gentiles were called into the faith of God at the eleventh hour and were upgraded to an equality with the children of Israel. To us has been given a position equal to that of the ancient people. The mighty ones of the ancient covenant are paraded before us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and yet the chapter ends with these words: "And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40).

It was for this reason that those who had labored since morning light were so disturbed because those who came at the eleventh hour were given a position equal to theirs. A writer of the past century, the Rev. F.W. Aveling, comments on this as follows: "The Jews, like many others who have special advantages, forgot that *election to privilege means election to responsibility*. Christianity is a marvelous leveler—upwards. And with one word Jesus leveled up the Gentiles to the same privileges as the Jews in the Christian church. This the Hebrew mind did not relish. It paid but little heed to the glorious promises of Isaiah, showing that the heathen world would come into the fold through the Messiah's influence. And it fostered the carnal spirit of expecting temporal blessing for spiritual excellence. The quintessence of this Jewish feeling is expressed in that most Hebrew of all the proverbs, 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay' (Proverbs 19:17)."

But again, we would miss the main lesson of the parable if we

stopped with this great truth, for there are two other truths to consider. The first of these is the Lord's condemnation of what He calls the evil-eye. Those who had worked in the vineyard from early morning were envious of those who came late and who received as much as they did. The Revised Version translates it: "Do you begrudge my generosity?" The King James Version stays with the literal Greek and gives us a thought that is more complete. The literal words are: "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" The evil-eye is the envious eye.

George Buttrick in *The Interpreter's Bible* has an excellent paragraph on this truth. He writes: "The verse, 'Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?' does not mean that God is a God of capricious whim and flat mind. It means that He has His own criteria which we, in mortal sight and selfish aim, cannot comprehend. Dimly we see the criteria: they are the demands on God of His own love, not the dreariness of man's legal *quid pro quo*. Thus the rewards of God ought to enlist our glad assent, not our murmuring. Why did the earlier workers not rejoice that the man who had waited long in the market place was now at peace, with money to take home to his family? Why did not the elder brother rejoice that the prodigal was now restored, set free from the rags and hunger of a far country? If only we had but a tincture of God's love would we not be glad, as heaven is glad, that the lost sheep is safe in the fold, delivered from briars and wolves?... The lovelessness of the long-term workers is here set in contrast with the love of God. How hard the doctrine of merit dies! How proud we are of our 'works'! How blindly we offer our legalities in protest against God's free grace! How loveless we are toward the sinner! This story is the gospel warrant for a great word of Paul, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast' " (Ephesians 2:8-9).

ENVY HATES GOODNESS

Yet the workers who put in the whole day were envious of the superior fortune of their fellow laborers. They had made their own

bargain, and they got their wages. Everything between them and the employer was just and right, but they envied the late-comers because they received more than simple justice. The employer's generosity, his lavish grace, aroused their envy. He states it simply: their eye was evil because he was good. This was the fault that he saw in them and for which he judges them so severely. They could not tolerate that he should fill someone else's cup to overflowing, even though he had poured into their cup with a just and even hand. Envy is described in the Proverbs as "the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30). We are told that "Wrath is cruel, and anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before envy?" (Proverbs 27:4). "Where envying and strife are—jealousy and selfish ambition—there will be confusion, disorder, and every vile practice" (James 3:16). Envy is a great sorrow for the welfare of our neighbor. When we consider these truths it is well that we bow and repeat from the inmost heart the words of the Anglican Prayer Book, "From envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord deliver us."

NOT FOR REWARD

We turn now to the last great lesson of this parable—we must never serve the Lord for reward. It is true that the Bible teaches that those who serve the Lord well will receive from Him a reward. But we are unable to discern whether any man is serving the Lord well. It is possible for us to see open sin in a life and to recognize complete departure from Scriptural principles, but we are not able to see into the heart of any individual and know what goes on there. The ways of God are inscrutable, past finding out (Romans 11:33). We cannot know who will receive a reward and for what the reward will be given. In the Philippian letter, Paul tells us that he had a great desire to possess a reward at the time of the resurrection from the dead, but he continues, "it must not be thought that I already have it in my hand, or that I am lacking nothing, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own." During the course of my Christian life, I do not consider myself to have "arrived." But I do concentrate on this:

"I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal—the reward being the upward call of God in Christ" (Philippians 3:11-16).

When this is understood, it is the death of the saccharine religion of self-delusion that is found outside Christianity in the writings of cult leaders and inside Christianity in the writings of middle-of-the-road liberals. This lavish excess of extravagant effusion brings God down to the place where He is the servant of the one who deigns to follow Him, and results in the cloying propositions of religious business success. This idea has even slopped over into some very fundamental circles where Christian laymen meet with the idea that a bank balance is a sure mark of God's approval and a high rating with Dun and Bradstreet is the aim and the object of the Christian life.

The believer who has understood some of the grace of God must always look beyond this. The aim and end of life is God Himself. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "Every advantage I had gained I considered lost for Christ's sake. Yes, and I look upon everything as loss compared with the overwhelming gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I did in actual fact suffer the loss of everything, but I considered it useless rubbish compared with being able to win Christ. For now my place is in him, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-achieved righteousness of the Law. God has given me the genuine righteousness which comes from faith in Christ. How changed are my ambitions! Now I long to know Christ and the power shown by his resurrection: now I long to share his sufferings, even to die as he died, so that I may perhaps attain, as he did, the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:7-11 Phillips translation). Let us keep in mind that Paul is not speaking about his physical resurrection. For him this was settled at Calvary. To young Timothy he wrote, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). As he writes to the Philippians, he is very desirous that he might live among them day by day as spiritually risen in Jesus Christ his Lord.

Some may call Frederick William Faber a mystic, but in one of

his hymns he has summed up the spiritual objectivity of the life that is ours in Christ. He wrote:

My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright.
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,
In depths of burning light.
Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art,
For Thou has stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart.
Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What rapture will it be
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
And gaze, and gaze on Thee.

Here is the end and aim, the goal and purpose, the race and prize of the Christian life. It matters little whether we came at the hour of sunrise or in the cool of the evening if, when we have been brought by His love, we look upon Him and want Him only. Whether we come early or late, we find ourselves first because we are centered in Him. Then, whether the world has recognized us or not, we know that the Lord and I have recognized each other and have looked at each other. His gaze has reached the depths of our souls, and our gaze has discovered that He loves us, and we are satisfied with each other. Then, no matter how the world ranks the believer in time or in quality, he knows that he now has and possesses that which both Christ and he call *first*. I have Him, and He has me. Do you have Him, and does He have you?

THE VOICE OF THE RISEN CHRIST

Now when he had arisen, he appeared early on the first day of the week, first to Mary Magdalene from whom he had cast out seven demons (Mark 16:9).

If we are to understand some of the most wonderful things about the resurrection we must have a clear idea of the time element. If we run the film in slow motion, we shall see some amazing things.

The Lord Jesus Christ ate the last supper with the disciples on what we would call Tuesday evening. The Dead Sea Scrolls have established that this Pascal meal was consumed at that time. On Wednesday he was crucified, and they hastened to take His body down in order that it might be buried before sunset, for Wednesday evening ushered in the great Sabbath, the Passover Sabbath, which fell on Thursday that particular year. No work was done on that day, which was the most solemn day of the Jewish year, and no burial spices could be sold as all the shops were closed. On Thursday at sunset, or on Friday morning, business resumed, and the women could go into the marketplace to buy spices which they needed in order to anoint Christ's body. They did not know, of course, that Joseph of Arimathea had already

done this. At sunset on Friday, the regular weekly Sabbath began. Luke tells us that the women remained quiet on that Saturday and planned to go out to the tomb of the Lord early on the first day of the week, Sunday morning in our calendar.

THE FIRST FRUITS

In the meantime, the Lord had risen from the dead. The time of the resurrection was undoubtedly shortly after sunset on what we would call Saturday. During those three nights and three days He had been in Paradise, which was then situated in Hell, and had proclaimed the good news of deliverance to all who were there, including Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and the believing thief. It is difficult to conceive of the joy in the hearts of that multitude of Old Testament believers. Their hopes had not been deceived. They were about to be vindicated completely, and their first step of triumph was before them.

We must not speculate on the details. We know from Matthew's account that some of the resurrected ones were given new bodies, that they walked the streets of Jerusalem, and that they appeared to many (Matthew 27:52) after Christ's resurrection. We believe that this group constitutes "the firstfruits" (I Corinthians 15:23), taken to Heaven in their new bodies, to give us assurance that the redemption of our bodies is also sure and certain.

I am not concerned with the harmonization of the four accounts of the resurrection. They are in such accord that it is impossible that they should have been made up separately; they are in such variance that it is impossible that they should have been made up through a conspiracy of deceit; the logical conclusion is that they were not made up at all. They are the results of eyewitness accounts which vary as eyewitness accounts always do, but without error, and they can be easily harmonized.

Mark 16:9 describes the moment when the Lord first revealed himself after His resurrection. The women had been to the tomb, found the stone rolled away, and had run back into the town to tell the disciples. They had returned to the tomb, but had been

separated from one another. Perhaps all but Mary Magdalene went back to town again. At such times people are apt to behave mechanically. At all events, we are told that the Lord appeared first to Mary Magdalene. John gives us the details.

Before we proceed to Christ's divine revelation of Himself, let us look at this woman who was chosen to be the recipient of such a wonderful honor. Mary Magdalene! How tradition has added to the biblical narrative in order to besmirch her name! All that the Bible says is that she was the object of the grace of Christ, and that out of her he cast seven demons (Luke 8:2). Without any grounds whatsoever she became identified with the unnamed sinner who anointed the feet of Jesus (Luke 7:37), and therefore appears in the list of saints as a harlot restored to purity and elevated to sainthood by repentance and faith. By the seventeenth century the word *Magdalene* was being used for a reformed prostitute. We thank God for His grace that lifts any woman from a life of earlier shame, but let us not be too sure that Mary Magdalene was of this kind. We know one thing about her, namely, that she gave money to support Christ and the disciples during His ministry. We are told in Luke, "He went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out . . . who provided for him out of their means" (Luke 8:1-3). Many Greek manuscripts, and therefore the revision, read, "who provided for *them*." Certainly Jesus Christ and possibly the disciples were supported financially by the gifts of Mary Magdalene and these other women. Because He had done much for them, they loved Him.

WHY TO MARY?

Here we come to the secret of our text. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ appear first to Mary Magdalene? If we accept the tradition that this Mary was the woman who anointed Christ's feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, we will remember that the Lord spoke to His host a parable of the ratio of love to forgiveness. We read, "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five

hundred denari [at least \$6,000 by present standards], and the other fifty [\$600]. When they could not pay he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41, 42). Simon judged correctly that the one who was forgiven the most would love the most. Christ agreed with him and applied the parable to the woman, saying that she had had many sins and that they had all been forgiven her, and that she loved much.

Whether or not we identify Mary Magdalene with this woman we may, indeed, identify the ratio of love. She had been demon-possessed; we need not go into whatever was the horror of her life. She met the Lord Jesus Christ; she was cleansed, freed and forgiven. All her love, faith, and hope turned to Christ. Henceforth her whole being was transformed. We must not forget that she was a Jewess, living before Pentecost, before the cross, and that the Holy Spirit was not dwelling within her, as He dwells within the church today. But God was working in her life, and her faith, hope, and love, these three, were centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then came what she thought was tragedy. Christ was crucified. She had stood outside Pilate's hall while He was tried, and she heard the roars of the crowd crying for His crucifixion. She saw Him fall under the burden of His cross and watched while Simon carried it to Calvary. Twice we read that she was among the women who watched the proceedings from afar. But as the hours of His suffering drew near, these women approached, step by step, until they were no longer far off. John tells us that as the day wore on and the hours of suffering drew to a close, the women all named Mary, were "standing by the cross" (John 19:25). There were Mary, His mother; Mary, the wife of Cleopas, the aunt of the Lord Jesus; and our Mary, Mary Magdalene.

At the time of Jesus' presentation in the temple, when He was an infant, the Lord God announced that a sword would pierce the soul of His mother, Mary (Luke 2:35). I am absolutely sure that a sword pierced the heart of Mary Magdalene also. It is worth emphasizing this in view of the erroneous teaching, the heresy, that His mother's sufferings were part of the expiation for our sins. These women suffered, Mary, His mother, and Mary Magdalene, but their sufferings were the sufferings of pure love, not redemptive suffering.

WHEN FAITH DIES

When the Lord Jesus died, something died in the hearts of these women also. Faith died. Mary and Cleopas lost their faith to the point where they started for their home in Emmaus, even though the first report of the resurrection had come to their ears. Hope died. They had trusted that the Lord Jesus would deliver them from Rome (Luke 24:21). Faith and hope died, but love did not die. Love kept Mary Magdalene near the body of the Lord Jesus even after faith and hope were gone. Matthew records that Mary Magdalene followed the little group headed by Joseph of Arimathea that carried the body of Christ from the cross to the tomb. "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulcher" (Matthew 27:61).

The great Sabbath of the Passover, Thursday, passed. On Friday the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that imposter said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore order the sepulcher to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:63, 64). Pilate acceded to their request, and Mary Magdalene watched as the stone was sealed and the guard was placed to keep God from coming back to life!

The Saturday Sabbath came to its close, and just after sundown, Mary Magdalene went to see the sepulcher (Matthew 28:1). We read, "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, 'do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead' " (Matthew 28:2-7). We can imagine the consternation, the bewilderment of these women. Evidently they glanced at the tomb and rushed off to Jerusalem to tell the disciples. John tells us that Peter and John started running for the

tomb. Luke tells us that Cleopas and Mary evidently said, "Let's go home," for they started for Emmaus, even after this world-shaking news. Mary Magdalene turned back for another visit to the tomb. How many round trips does this make? One on Wednesday, one or two on Friday, and now two and maybe three trips between sunset and the great dark of the morning, before dawn.

WHEN LOVE LIVES

Peter and John had left the tomb before Mary returned on this last visit. Love brought her back there for she did not yet dare to believe that Christ had risen from the dead, even though she had heard the testimony of the angel. Though faith and hope were dead, love remained alive. Now that confusion and bewilderment had taken the place of faith and hope, love was still alive. "But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb" (John 20:11). Mark has told us that the Lord Jesus appeared first to Mary. John tells us the story, as it were, in slow motion. It is worth our time to focus our attention on every slightest gesture of this woman because thus it will enable us to see, in all His glory, the majesty and wonder of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall see what He did for this woman and what He is capable of doing for you and me, today.

She stood weeping at the door of the open tomb. "As she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" There is still no faith; there is still no hope; there is nothing but love. She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She thought that some unknown people had removed the dead body. She did not have the faintest idea that He was alive. He was alive, but at the moment her face was turned toward the tomb, and her back was turned toward Christ standing behind her without her knowledge and unrecognized. At this moment, we read, "She turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus." Very probably it was still long before sunrise and quite dark. So Jesus speaks to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" But now she has her back to the tomb, and her face is turned

towards a form that she does not know and that she is not interested in knowing for she is thinking only of Jesus.

We do not know why she did not recognize His voice. Perhaps it was a part of the divine unfolding. We know that He walked and talked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, later in the day, and that they did not know Him until He revealed Himself. Mary thought this man was the gardener. She answered Him in one of the most poignant sentences of all literature. "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away" (John 20:11-15).

She was still thinking in terms of a dead body. She had been weeping for three days and three nights, and her heart was empty even though she still had a few tears left. She had passed through unutterable anguish and had been for many hours without sleep. She had been three times out to the tomb and twice back to the town. She offered to carry away the full weight of the body of a man, plus the hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes. The Bible tells us that the body had been anointed with one hundred pounds of spices which Nicodemus had wrapped in the linen which enshrouded the body (John 19:39). Even if Jesus were slight of weight, Mary was offering, without thinking, to carry away a weight of body and linen cloth and ointments which would go beyond the strength of many a strong man. But she did not think of this for she loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and though her faith and hope were dead, her love was strong. Here is one of the greatest character portrayals in all of literature, human or divine. Here is the heart of a good woman. Here is love, offering to do the impossible as love always does.

Mary

At this point Mary turned her back on Christ and faced the tomb once more. It does not say so in any of the narratives, but the fact is proved by what follows. She is not interested in one whom she thinks to be only the gardener. When she has made her request her bewilderment continues to govern her mind, but her heart is true to itself and to the Lord whom she loves. She turns back toward the tomb because in her mind and heart Christ is still to be

remembered in conjunction with the place where she saw His body last.

Alexander Maclaren has given us a brilliant description at this point. "Possibly she may have thought that the resting place in Joseph's new sepulcher was only meant for temporary shelter. At all events the corpse was gone, and the fact suggested no hope to her. How often do we, in like manner, misinterpret as dark what is really pregnant with light, and blindly attribute to 'them' what Jesus does! A tone of mind thus remote from anticipation of the great fact is a precious proof of the historical truth of the resurrection; for here was no soil in which hallucinations would spring, and such people would not have believed him risen unless they had seen Him living.

"Her clinging love needed more than an empty grave and folded clothes and waiting angels to stay its tears, and she turned indifferently and wearily away from the interruption of the question to plunge again into her sorrow . . . Who can say anything about that transcendent recognition, in which all the stooping love of the risen Lord is smelted into one word, and the burst of rapture, awe, astonishments, and devotion pours itself through the narrow channel of one other word?"

"Mary..." "Rabboni..." When He spoke her name she turned back again. This is how we know she had turned away from the one whom she thought was the gardener. But now her name had come into her heart from the lips of Jesus. As the right key slips easily into the lock for which it is made, so the love of the Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name and slips into our being. "Rabboni..." Her faith is raised from its death. Here is the resurrection of Mary Magdalene. Her hope is raised from its death. Love has triumphed, and these three are once more abiding together. The heart is full.

The final lesson in Christ's appearance to Mary lies in the fact that He refused to accept her on the basis of the old relationship. Those who lived before the time of Christ did not have the advantage that we have. It is a great and joyous fact that after the resurrection of Christ we have a place altogether superior to that place which men had before he died. Mary called Him by the same name by which she had known Him in life. He had shown, by calling her name, that He was the same yesterday, today, and

forever. His love never changes. But there must be growth in our life. We cannot hold his feet with earthly hands. We cannot know Him in any earthly relationship. His prohibition includes a great charter of liberty. He says, "Touch me not; I am not yet ascended" (John 20:17). And this encloses, "When I am ascended, you may touch me."

The Lord had come from the throne of Heaven, where He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Philippians 2:6). He had gone down, down, down to the cross. Now He was on His way back. The resurrection was merely the first step to His absolute glorification. The three steps in his exaltation were resurrection, ascension, enthronement at the right hand of God, and we are in all of them. Today he calls us by name. Today he whispers of His love. Today he tells us that He is approachable. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

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