

THE MINISTER'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

BY

E. W. McMILLAN



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**TO
MY FAMILY**

**Who have inspired me so
much and for so many years
by their unwavering faith in
the efforts which always have been
so feeble in my judgment**

AND

**My personal friends
throughout the world, who
have inspired me for a long
span of years by their repeated
expressions of appreciation**

AND

**To the Gospel preachers
and elders of congregations
who attended the lectures given
during the lectureship at Abilene
Christian College in 1957, 1958 and
1959**

**This volume is dedicated most
affectionately**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE MINISTER'S SPIRITUAL LIFE ----- 1

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUALITY TOWARD GOD ----- 16

CHAPTER III

HIDDEN SHOALS ----- 29

CHAPTER IV

ROOTS WHICH FEED SPIRITUALITY ----- 47

CHAPTER V

"AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM" ----- 63

CHAPTER VI

PERFECT SPIRITUALITY ----- 73

CHAPTER VII

AM I SPIRITUAL? ----- 90

CHAPTER VIII

PATIENTLY ENDURING SUFFERING ----- 102

FOREWORD

"The Minister's Spiritual Life" has been produced by either accident or Divine Providence, depending on how one views such matters and especially on how one thinks of Providence. Probably the reader's estimation of the book will have considerable bearing on his conclusions of what produced it, too.

Of the several books written previously, no other was prepared and written so unexpectedly or with as little previous expectations of "writing another book." It all came about this way: Late in the fall session of Abilene Christian College, as I now recall, just before Christmas season, Dr. J. D. Thomas, Director of Lectureship in the college, attended an evening session on the campus where the writer spoke to a group of students who meet monthly. The following day he called and requested that I teach a daily class during the lectureship for ministers of the gospel and any others who might wish to attend. Almost, I declined because my work already was overwhelming in content and I could see little time to prepare. Moreover his request, "speak on the minister's spirituality," told me automatically that I would need extensive study; but I promised.

Come lectureship I had made two lecture outlines and lacked two more for the four days. I went into the room the first day severely rebuking myself for accepting an assignment so important when I knew I would have so little special time for preparation; but the few present that day were so inspiring I lost my regrets. Day after day as the audiences grew, and then when a request by Brother Thomas for a repeat the next year in the large auditorium, enlarged into several hundred, I labored between trying to think what I meant on some briefly set down notation in

“my outlines” (which would not stand any kind of test in a college class) and speaking out of a memory which reached back fifty years. Frankly, most that I said those two years came from sources which I have never put on paper—experience, what I have read, silent thoughts never before expressed, plus a few quotations memorized years gone.

As this volume goes to press, after two years of work (at short intervals between other duties discharged) two things I wish to say: 1) Except for the constant and prolonged urgency of those who attended the classes at Abilene and my students then attending my classes in Abilene Christian College, with my family urging also—all of them asking that the thoughts expressed be put into permanent book form, I would never have had the courage to prepare outlines and write the chapters included here. And it must be confessed even now that some chapters were written out of my heart and memory more than under the guidance of an outline. 2) This book is the basic tone of my soul, mellowed by frequent hard living and much suffering; in its expressions it often walked along the road of bitter tears, shed years gone; it also sat upon pinnacles of joy and peace, built up over those years, which peace is stronger than any turmoil can disturb.

With sincere prayer that the volume may help all who read it, and profoundly grateful to all who encouraged its writing, this book is released for public appraisal with deep affections.

THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER I

THE MINISTER'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spirituality is a quality of character, which God requires.

First Corinthians was written to a church with twelve major sins in it. "I can not write unto you as unto spiritual; but as unto carnal," Paul said (2:11-14). He went on saying, "The world cannot receive the things of God because they are spiritually discerned." Two things are clear from this: (1) Spirituality is a real quality; (2) It is an interpreting power which gives those who possess it an ability religiously that people do not have who are unspiritual. That is the meaning of "Discern." If one had two glasses of water before him and a colored paper in his hand, he might dip the paper in one glass without changing the color of the paper; then he might dip it in the other water and change that color. An observer might ask for an explanation only to be told, "I do not know why the color changed; I cannot explain it." But a good student in chemistry might step up and explain that the chemical elements in the color of the paper have been acted upon by the chemicals in one of the glasses of water, whereas there was no such chemical in the other water. That student "discerned the chemical change scientifically." That is exactly Paul's meaning in the First Corinthian passage. He was simply saying that it was difficult to write to them because the Corinthians' spirituality was so lacking it would be very hard for them to get his point of view.

Typical of Paul's total emphasis on spirituality, here are a few quotations: "I long to come unto you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end that you may be edified" (Romans 1:11). "Now we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that

we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Corinthians 2:12-13). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14). "For we know that the law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your SPIRITUAL service" (Romans 12:1-2). "If we have sown unto you SPIRITUAL things, is it a great thing that we should reap your carnal things?" (I Corinthians 9:11). The Israelites "Did all eat the same SPIRITUAL meat and did all drink the same SPIRITUAL drink, for they drank of that SPIRITUAL rock which followed them; and that rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10:3-4). "Ye who are SPIRITUAL restore such an one in the spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with all the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and SPIRITUAL understanding" (Colossians 1:9). Peter adds: "As new born babes long for the spiritual milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2).

What, then, is spirituality? Like God Himself, it does not lend itself to the limitations of a worded definition. It is understood more by how it behaves, what it will do or not do, rather than being defined in words. We can bring out its characteristic qualities; learn how it acts and to some extent describe it.

I. Spirituality is greatly concerned about true values and about the right attitudes and motives. It knows the difference between living *with* and living *for* people.

A business concern may sponsor a religious program, on which the truth may be taught, but never be moved by spirituality in what it does, because the program is designed to bring customers to the man's business. Certainly, some good may be done by the program, and we can be glad for that; but the motives in the business firm are material, not spiritual.

A preacher may campaign on some issue, or preach a sermon more from the prominence he thinks it will give him than from the deep longing to save people. A rich young ruler once asked Christ what "good thing" he could do to gain eternal life but the answer grieved him. He would have been willing to pay a large sum to start and complete some spectacular good work; but he was not willing to lay his last dollar on the altar of sacrifice beside the Lord's life. He was lacking in spiritual desire. The Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus whom they caught in adultery and asked him what to do with her. If their motives had been spiritual they would have acted without asking Jesus, for the law itself named the penalty; but their motives were not spiritual, therefore they used her case as a pretext with the Lord. Paul knew some men who preached Christ through envy, hoping to heap afflictions on him. His spirituality led him to be grateful that Christ was preached but their motives in preaching Christ were carnal, not spiritual. A preacher may decide where he will work largely under the influence of his salary, or the prominence, or the comforts one place affords over what the other affords, regardless of the amount of good that can be done in each place. But spiritual motives are based on the permanent values involved. Those values may include the comparative opportunities of saving people; the crucial circumstances, which especially fit or unfit him for the best results, or even the environment of his family, as in the case of Lot. But spiritual thinking will steer itself

along the line of minimum selfishness and maximum possibility for service. And the most potent facit that feeds the final decision will be *right for the sake of right, truth for the sake of truth, love for love's own sake, honor for honor's sake, humility for the virtue in humility.*

II. Spirituality is much tested by how much emphasis is placed on the comparative values between temporal and redemptive rewards.

Temporal rewards may be described as positions in life which feed the pride, give prominence, afford larger financial incomes, or otherwise bestow rewards that belong only to the temporal life.

Redemptive rewards belong in that category of things indicated in the history of Moses when it is said that "He looked unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11:26). These words explain how and why it seemed so easy for him to refuse the throne of Egypt, go far from home and serve as shepherd in the country where he later would lead God's people toward the Promised Land, be patient and longsuffering for forty years through the wilderness while the whole nation was rebellious, take a clear view of the Promised Land, then turn and walk to a place as yet unnamed and lie down in death with not even one relative or friend present. The temporal enjoyments and satisfactions missed by Moses in that course were many, but missing them did not seem to bother him, "For he looked unto the recompense of reward."

Paul presents one of the most dramatic, yet sublime, examples of this kind of choosing. Read slowly and with deep meditation these lines, please: "You know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which

befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life as dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:18-24). Again, "I ceased not to warn every man night and day with tears . . . I coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel . . . These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." Do we inquire of the means by which Paul could pursue this line of true-heartedness toward God under all that he endured? The answer is, "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." Paul lived right himself. No man is really spiritual until he can control himself. He was humble and tender-hearted. He practiced what he preached—"Weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice." Until we can cry over our own sins and the sins of others; and until we do cry over a lost world we lack much in the spiritual dynamic which brought the Lord Jesus Christ to this world, "To seek and save that which was lost." Moreover, Paul was willing to die for those he wanted to save, for he did not count his life "As dear unto myself." These are not the despairing words of a worn out old man. He was facing a foreseen long period of whippings, beatings, imprisonments, and he as good as said, "I see it all very clearly before it begins." But Paul was able to compare accurately the value of saving his own life at the expense of not saving some people's souls. He consid-

ered that giving his life to save many souls was a very small cost. Being able always to judge properly between the most important things and the less important then having the courage to choose the right course is "Spiritual discernment." There is, further, the element of "fidelity unto trust." Jesus had said years before, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful in much; and he that is unfaithful in a very little is unfaithful in much." True to the trust placed in him, Paul said, "If only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." This spiritual urge will drive Christians into hard work when they are almost fatigued, while others with less spiritual fervor will stay at home and rest.

Spirituality is measured largely by the readiness with which we judge others and the manner in which these judgments are expressed. Some people judge others untrustworthy until they prove themselves worthy of trust. Others assume that people are honorable until they show themselves dishonorable. It is common to hear a person say, "I never met him until recently but I just do not trust him. He has something covered." Others may say of the same man, "I did not see anything wrong with him." These differing judgments come nearer revealing the hearts of the two persons judging than they do the character of the person they are judging. I recall preaching a sermon on the radio in Nashville, Tennessee, some years past, which brought two distinctly different reactions. One said in a letter, "That was the best sermon I ever heard, it helped me so very much." The other letter said, "I have never heard you say anything on that radio that I thought deserved to be called a sermon; but that thing you have just finished is the poorest I have ever heard you attempt." The sermon was what it was before anybody judged it; so, the comments added nothing and took nothing from the sermon

as such. The two comments did, however, reveal two widely different hearts. Our judgments of others often do the same kind of thing. The man, Paul, who said so much about spiritual values wrote to the Corinthians that "Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things," which is another way of saying that love trusts, love does not despair, it is very patient. These are spiritual qualities.

Religious people have developed a group of "loaded words" which they should use with much caution until their prejudicial tensions subside. Among these are the words: "Radical"; "Extremist"; "Narrow-minded"; "Hobbyist"; "Liberal"; "Modernist"; "Weakling"; etc., etc. These are perfectly good words but they have no definite meaning, because people using them have different standards of judging. For example, you may select almost any preacher you wish and stand him up for judgment, and there are people who, in their judgments, will call him both sound and unsound, radical and soft, a weakling and an extremist. One thinks he is an extremist because he condemns some things which are acceptable to the person judging him. Others think he is weak because did not condemn those things severely enough to suit them.

The really serious factor in all this is the fact that when one of those "loaded" words is used to describe somebody, people who read or hear it immediately form a judgment about that person. If wrong, the person who judged him has committed an injustice, and the Lord teaches that injustice is a grievous sin. Every Christian is supposed to be "God-called"; "God-disciplined"; "God-trained." No personality is more obligated to reflect these spiritual values than the Gospel minister. He is in the position of being a symbol of the perfect. No one's inconsistency is more quickly seen than his. To the average person he is the representation of true Christianity.

How can the Gospel minister develop the high culture here described as spirituality? How can he be the sermon he preaches?

1. Good reading is most important. We are the sum of all the thoughts which have been welcomed in our minds. The passing of good thoughts through our minds will leave their nature in our character even long after the thought as such has been forgotten. The Bible—God's thoughts; good materials related or unrelated directly to the Bible; or even materials which leave the mind pointed toward something worthwhile should be a part of one's reading habits.

2. Meditations. Silence is powerful; it is the element out of which great things fashion themselves. "Blessed is the man . . . whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law doth he *meditate* day and night." "MEDITATE!" The psalmist guaranteed that one who does that will prosper in all that he does; his fruitage will resemble the tree planted along the bank of a stream where there is always water. Something in meditation resembles the machine which recharges itself while using up its power. The dross can be thrown off through meditation; the will can gain strength; the best course to pursue can be formulated; and the heart can become more tender. Taking time to "think things over" may save many heartaches in later years. The Bible doctrine of fasting and prayer is based on the value in much meditation. "Stand in awe and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Psalm 4:4). "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient time. I call to remembrance my song in the night; I communed with mine own heart; my spirit made diligent search" (Psalm 77:5, 6).

Meditation is faith-building. We become what we believe, and we believe what we have thought out in medita-

tions. Silent reflections, then, are the fires in which faith has been purified; and out of these meditations, we emerge strong in heart, because, through meditations, we can bring to our aid the wisdom, power, and goodness which made the worlds and "upholds all things" by his word. No outside force can prevent the Christian from changing his own character into the likeness of God Himself by reverent meditations.

Meditation can breed hate or love; mercy or revenge. Through whole nights of prayer and meditation Jesus fortified Himself against the human weaknesses which so often shame us now. As we travel with Him through all that he experienced we are amazed at his kindness. The woman at Jacob's well, with all her sharp shafts, could not shake him (John 4); he remained kind, and won her. His kindness, moreover, was not the sort which has underneath an evident impatience, which tries to cover up with honey-coated words. Even when he spoke to those who at the moment might be plotting his death, his enemies marveled at "the words of grace with which he spoke." His rich endowment of reserve spirituality served him in all times of emergency in the same manner that a reserve capital can serve a financier in reverses—he could draw on that spirituality without depleting Himself. Even on the cross, this endowment enabled him to pray, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

3. There is great value in a set goal and in driving straight toward it. Mr. Thomas A. Edison once was offered consolation by a well-intending friend, who said: "Mr. Edison, it must be a very discouraging thing to fail in seventy-nine successive experiments." But Mr. Edison replied, "I am not discouraged in the least, and I have not made one failure. I have just learned seventy-nine ways it cannot be done." Evidently Mr. Edison was so set on reaching his

goal that he could regard each unsuccessful experiment as one more step forward, because it reduced the number of wrong ways ahead for him. That is positive, constructive thinking. The minister of the Gospel has many experiences which baffle him. Left to human standards for measurement, he often feels that he has failed. There has to be an endowment within him which does not respect the meaning of "give up." Years of diligent, patient nurture are required. Moreover, the goal is not one which waits ahead for our own selfish enjoyment. A vital part of that goal for each of us is determined by how much we have been worth to others in reaching their attainments. We do not attain it by ourselves, for we travel with others. We do not reach our goals except as we take others, too. The culture which deserves to be called spiritual is tolerant of, and helpful to, our fellow-travelers.

The carnal mind may say that tolerance is a weakness; but the spiritual mind affirms that tolerance is conviction grown tender. A few hours before Jesus died on the cross he told Peter, "Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed that thy faith may not fail." This he said knowing that Peter would deny him before the next day. What tender compassion! But it really was not a strange attitude because Christ's goal was the deliverance of others, and his abundant spiritual reserve overbalanced the discouragement in Peter's weakness. This is seen in the apostle Paul also. When informed about the numerous grave sins in the Corinthian church, his first impulse was to go over there "with a rod," but his more spiritual nature restrained that emotion and he stayed away, "to spare you." When he did write, he says, "I wrote out of much anxiety of heart, and with many tears" (II Corinthians). As a shepherd of souls, the minister is rightly expected to be "longsuffering, forbearing, and forgiving," always "showing thyself a pattern of good

things." But this goal is not some far off point; it is a spiritual attainment within the Self.

4. A fourth helpful experience is frequent self-examination. "Examine yourselves" is a favorite saying of the apostle Paul. Our Lord also said, "Why do you behold the speck in your brother's eye when you have a log in your own eye? And how can you say, Let me remove that speck from your eye when you have a log in your eye? You hypocrites! First remove the log from your eye then you can see better how to remove the speck from your brother's eye." The hypocrisy in this passage is the habit of finding fault with others while having a larger fault in Self. Sincerity would require that we first correct ourselves. The fault in others was not imaginary, nor does Christ intend to say that wrongs should be condoned. He is only saying that genuineness in all of us will first examine Self and make the needed corrections there; then we can do a better job of helping others improve themselves.

Many individual elements could be put into an analysis of the content in this self-examination; but there is one over-all principle which, if straightened out in ourselves, will correct all others. Let us call that principle LOVE. The Lord said we must love God with all our souls, all our minds, and all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. The conflict of Jesus Christ with his contemporaries was not about what the law of Moses said: it was about how to apply it to human lives. He was the personification of love, but the religious leaders of his time were examiners of others, supremely. In him was summed up all that the prophet implied when he called him the "Rose of Sharon." When the sinful Mary Magdalene anointed his feet in the home of Simon, the Pharisee, a disciple, thought he should send her away; but Jesus believed he should stay close to her, that he may improve her reputation and her character. His life, planted in the society of his time, was like

a great flower, whose roots grow deep in the mud and slush of the bottom lands. But the flowers are so fragrant and beautiful that one forgets the mud around the roots. The life of Jesus, planted in a society black with sins, was so rich and towering that no one could imagine it as a part of that society. The love which did the planting, the grace and fragrance in the character which blossomed from this planting, point the minds of the world to the flower itself, forgetful of the mud in the society where he lived. The gospel minister, too, must develop himself through constant self-examination into that kind of spiritual personality.

Spirituality is more interested in the ultimate than in the immediate. Immediate things are important only because of their relationship to the ultimate. Abraham left Ur, "not knowing where he was going," and he was faithful for more than fifty years, without having so much as one foot of land he could call his own, because "he looked for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Moses could decline the throne of Egypt and prefer the afflictions of God's people for a season, because he "looked unto the recompense of reward." His was an unfretting faith, which looked so far ahead that nothing immediate mattered much; it did not even matter that he was denied an entrance into the Promised Land, or that no friend or loved one may attend his funeral. The most impressive thing in the earth-life of Jesus is his steadfast journey to his cross. He made no effort to escape it; he goaded his enemies who constantly sought to hasten it; and he often rebuked his friends for not wanting him to endure it. Moreover, almost in its shadow he exclaimed, "I have overcome the world." Does one ask, "Wherein was his victory?" The answer is that he had reached the place where his suffering would be accepted by Divine Justice as the price for all men's sins. In accomplishing this service for others,

he counted himself victorious. Spirituality is never better than when it lays its own rich Self down for unworthy others, even for its enemies. No other living person can be expected rightly to manifest this redeeming grace more than the Gospel minister.

One day I was riding through Arkansas on a bus, when a pudgy man boarded at a small village. He did not care to hunt a seat toward the back for he was riding out only about five miles. On the way he got into a conversation with a small boy. As the bus was stopping he asked the boy, "Son, what are you going to be when you get grown—a preacher?" The boy did not know; but, the man said, "It's a mighty good racket." At first there is a flick of resentment at this observation—"a mighty good racket." No reader of these lines will believe that the man's implication against gospel preachers is fair. But on reflection, most of us can recall some men who called themselves preachers, whose efforts were little short of a racket. Unfortunately the best men in the ministry have to suffer in their reputations from the bad influence of some other ministers. But that is all the more reason why good men should grow to great spiritual statures. Their spirituality must spread, grow tall, grow deep and be truly great. And doing this drives us back to the all-impelling urge of love.

If it be inquired, "Why and how does love play such an important role in this discussion, when there are many other Christian virtues to be acquired?" the answer is that love is the one all-impelling inner drive which can be relied upon to produce all the others. During the romantic stage of courtship a man is always his best. Studiously he is thoughtful; he remembers the birthdays, the other special seasons, and the many niceties of social ethics. During that period he likely will insist that his love is deep and genuine. If he cannot convince his fiancee of this, she will not consider him for marriage. And a part of what

convinces her that he loves her is the prolonged period of thoughtfulness during which he does so many nice things for her.

But after marriage, things have a way of leveling off, and the intense romance cools. It is possible for the man to continue remembering all the anniversaries and being thoughtful but still leave the impression that he does not love as intensely as he once did. If, however, his warm glow of love is unchanged toward his wife she will know for sure that it still lives and he, too, will remember with ease all the thoughtfulness that he practiced when he was winning her for his wife. It is possible, therefore, for demonstrations to continue without love; but love, if it continues, will take care of the demonstrations automatically.

If we transfer this relationship to the minister's life, it becomes evident that he, too, may be able to preach the truth accurately and observe all the outward forms of worship activities but have only a scanty portion of the sacrificial love which Jesus the Christ manifested. But if we have that yearning love for humanity, it will direct and guide to an accurate performance of his duties, and at the same time it will endow what he says and does with something wonderful, without which he cannot be so useful or effective. The apostle said, therefore, "Above all these, put on love which is the bond of perfectness."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. Study carefully all the passages on the subject;
 - A. Is spirituality a reality or just a convenient word?
 - B. If a reality, is spirituality a character quality?
- II. Can you define spirituality?
- III. Name the first thing given about which spirituality is concerned.

- A. Give an illustration of how a religious program can be carried on without being produced by a spiritual motive.
- B. Give some illustrations of ways people may do God's commands without being spiritual.
- C. When a minister's desires are mainly spiritual, what elements will be most influential in his decisions about where to work?
- D. Discuss the importance of each element.

IV. Name the second distinctive characteristic of spirituality.

- A. Give some Bible persons who have made the wise decision under this quality of character.
- B. Can you name conditions today where this principle applies?

V. Name the third quality given of spirituality.

- A. What two attitudes do people sometimes have toward people they meet?
- B. Which attitude do you think is most often used?
- C. Show how we sometimes reveal our own character by our judgment of others.
- D. Why are some words called "loaded" words?
- E. Why is it better to use these words with more caution?

VI. Name the things which will help one develop spirituality.

- A. Discuss these things one by one.
- B. Discuss your judgments about whether Christian people are sufficiently serious about these things.
- C. Can you suggest ways in which church groups can develop more spirituality?

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUALITY TOWARD GOD

Someone asked, "Should we not assume that Christians are spiritual toward God? How can a Christian be otherwise?" Possibly a real Christian will be spiritual toward God; but the frequent commands dealing with the several aspects of spirituality make it clear that people are not always as spiritual as they should be. Facts show that the dearth of spirituality in this respect accounts for the large number of prodigals from the true faith.

I. Spirituality toward God as a Divine Being.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

2. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy soul, all thy mind, and all thy strength" (Matthew 19:19; 22:19). These two commandments were given 1500 years apart. After several thousand years we are still confessing our sins of putting other things ahead of our loyalty to God; and after almost 2000 years since the last command was given, we are admitting our failure to live up to Christ's command to love.

The spiritual mind feels an unworthiness before God and an incapacity for comprehending Him, though awe-inspired by faith in Him. It never tries to reason God into its own understanding. Its conscious inadequacy drives the life to its knees in prayer; and it also stands erect with bold courage because it trusts in God and His good Providence in its behalf.

The spiritual mind communes with God through faith, even while it is baffled by its inability to understand or comprehend. A devout spiritual mind is impossible with-

out an implicit faith in special Providence; and a mind devoutly committed to this Providence is by nature a spiritual mind. A maturing spiritual mind is drawn increasingly to God by its growing understanding of the meaningfulness of its relationship to him.

II. Spirituality feels reverent toward God's created universe, and is greatly inspired by it, because He created it.

The old country school house in years gone was a place for the frequent making of Friday afternoon speeches. My first one was "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." My mother trained me for weeks for it. I marched in stiff, bowed stiffly, swallowed, then let out with speed and did not stop until it was finished, then I bowed and left. I said it that way because that was all I saw in it. But when I was grown and became a student of science, I learned something of how numerous the stars are, that some of them are so far away that light traveling fast as it does requires a million years to reach the earth. The vastness of space and the glories of the stellar heavens inspired me almost into speechlessness at night. I read with more meaning than ever before the nineteenth Psalm—"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." And then on a clear night, I could walk out into the yard and look toward the most distant stars, but I did not race with "Twinkle, twinkle, little star." Slowly and meditatively, as if talking to the star while it listened, I said,

"Twinkle . . . twinkle . . . little star,
How . . . I . . . wonder . . . what . . . you . . . are,
Up . . . above . . . the . . . world . . . so . . . high,
Like . . . a . . . diamond . . . in . . . the . . . sky."

I am bewildered now always when I look, and look into the starry hosts. They seem so far, far away, so still and

soft in their light, so silent, yet so warm and real. Interested in them I go and read again what scientists say about them—what they are possibly made of, how many there are, how far apart they are, and all that, then I go out and look again—“Twinkle, twinkle, little star, *How I wonder what you are!*” Who could think all this without growing more reverent toward God? Who could speak of the laws of science? For these are the laws of God in science. Who could think of them in terms of chance? For it was He who “made all things,” and the heavens “declare the glory of God”; and “There is no language where their voice is not heard.” The spiritual mind is devoutly reverent toward all God’s created universe—the heavens, the hills, the oceans, the green carpets of grass, the gentle snow falling in the winter, the warm rays of the sun, and the soft light of the moon. To all languages and peoples they say the same things—“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech; night unto night showeth knowledge.”

III. The spiritual mind respects God’s law, as it does God himself.

There can be no respect for God while there is disrespect for his will.

Scholarship has made large contributions to understanding. Textual criticism has been helpful in a large sense; but in many the human mind has trusted its own capacity so much that reason has replaced Bible faith. What some call faith is little more than their rationalized conclusions about faith. Under the teachings of such men one finds it impossible to use freely the apostle Paul’s doctrine on faith. The same problem arises in the effort to embrace the doctrine of faith through all the Holy Scriptures, because these great intellects sometimes leave us little more

than a collection of garbled fragments of our traditional Book of books.

Maybe we can gain a deeper insight by taking a brief journey and looking honestly at faith as a problem as well as a great comfort.

Let me give you this borrowed definition of Faith. Forty years ago I heard a man whose name soon left my memory say: "Faith is accepting as true what another has said, because he said it." Has Faith been a problem to you? Let me say that it has been whether you were conscious of it or not. The Bible says that the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness, and that it is a stumbling block to others. The truth is that the simple story of Jesus of Nazareth has been no greater joy in the lives of believers than it has been a stumbling stone to others. Recount, if you will, the difficulty with which many have faced the Bible teaching on the efficacy of water baptism to the alien sinner. Recount your own experiences and especially the difficulty which you have faced in accepting a life of suffering. Recall, also, the struggle you have had in accepting, through practice, the Bible doctrine of suffering for your enemies. These are but suggestions of the struggle of Faith.

Let us now break our problem down into its parts. Here is the one large idea of God. From Genesis to Revelation you read about him. You never saw him, heard him or felt him. Yet, you are asked to believe that he made all things; that he is unlimited in all his attributes—of love, of power, of knowledge, and of presence—and that all of his motives are benevolent. You are asked to believe that he means as much good in his chastisements as he means in his tender provisions. No matter how things may appear, you are asked to believe that, all things considered, he is as good to you as he is to anybody else, because he is no

respector of persons. You are asked to believe that if you will deny yourself and sacrifice he will pay one hundred fold, and you are asked to believe that no matter how many myriads of years may elapse, the forgotten bodies of all peoples will rise from the dead and that the righteous will live with him forever and ever. Let me admit that the full and joyous acceptance of all that is very much a problem. Yet, the Bible says, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). But, that is not all.

By promise and prophecy through four thousand years of the Old Testament, a Savior was foretold. The whole of the Old Testament looked forward to him, and the whole of the New Testament is built around him. That person is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary. We never saw, heard or felt him, yet we are commanded to believe that he is as infinite as God; that he is able, willing, and ready to save unto the uttermost all who believe in him, and that he is now in heaven preparing for all who thus obey him. We are asked, by supreme sacrifices, to back up the sincerity of our claims and to trust him to repay our every loss. We are asked to believe and trust him as our intercessor with God the Father, in all the needs we may have in all our relationships. In fact, he said, "Except you believe that I am he you shall die in your sins" (John 8:32). And, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And, this is not all.

On the table before our eyes daily is a book that we call the Bible. Out of the countless millions of books, this is the one that claims to be supreme. It requires that we believe it was written by men under the guidance of God and that, therefore, all of its facts are accurate and dependable; that all of its commandments are backed by the authority of heaven and that we shall be wiser to follow its teaching

than we would to do anything else in the world. A half trust of its promises is not enough—we are required to repose implicit trust that God and the Savior, the angels and Spirit, whom we never saw, heard or touched with our hands, wrote the book and that they will fulfill every promise made concerning both the present and the world that is to follow this. It is called “the perfect law of liberty” and it is said to contain “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” It reveals the will of God whom we never saw and presents the challenge, “Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7: 21). And the closing message says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” And again, “If any shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18, 19). If we lay hold upon its teachings with implicit confidence we are promised everlasting bliss in the world to come; if we refuse, we shall find ourselves on the outside, where, it says, there will be “dogs, and sorcerers, and murderers, and whoremongers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev. 21:8). But that is not all.

There are opposing forces before us, which deliberately or otherwise discourage or crush our faith at times. The agnostics are a school of trained thinkers. Their powers of reason and their cultural attainments cannot be denied. They have marshalled the sum of their powers in denial of the Bible, of God, of Christ, of immortality and of eternity. Beside them there is the gnostic, who assumes the attitude of suspended judgment. He regards the agnostic

as an arrogant egotist, and he regards the Christian as a simpleton. Being mentally honest to wade through their combined reasonings, detect their fallacies and come through with a richer faith is a struggle which not everyone can endure. And nearer home there stands a yet more difficult element in our problem. It is the well venerated, but certain, hypocrite in religion itself. When faith has encountered him, has met and grappled with the negligent Christian, the cold, spiritless formalist, and the controversial legalist; and when it has been forced to face and solve the problem of creeds and ecclesiasticism, it has expended enough emotion to be weary and discouraged, for all these, like the moss on the trees, cling to the life of faith, to increase its struggle.

As indicated already, there is set over against this difficult task the Bible requirement that we shall believe with an unflinching trust. An Old Testament prophet said that the just shall live by faith, and the New Testament writer, Paul, quoted this fact as the guiding light of the Christian. "We walk by faith, and not by sight" (II Cor: 5:7), he said; and again, "The just shall live by faith." As really as the body is sustained by the food that we eat, the religious life is fed and developed by the faith which we have in our hearts. But it is a dark picture that the Lord left us concerning the faith of his people when he returns. He had just finished relating the case of a widow in court. The judge was a stern, unjust man. The woman had no money with which to employ a skilled attorney, so her case seemed hopeless from all human points of view. But she hit upon the idea of persistence. So she went to the judge, again, and again, and again. Every time she went she pleaded her needs of relief from the injustice of her adversary. And the judge finally granted her request, not out of honor and justice, but to get rid of the woman. The Master taught that what the persistence of the helpless

widow got from the unrighteous judge a simple, trusting faith can get from the good God, and "that speedily." But then he closed with the sad question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?" This is a gloomy implication that few Christians will really believe him.

Not an act should be planned, not a hope entertained, not a struggle made, except as these are inspired by faith in the overruling Providence of God.

I have lived longer and deeper than some. It has not been easy always to go forward. There have been times when men whom I trusted to be friends proved traitors and when even God appeared to have forgotten that I lived. The currents of life were swift, the feverish experiences that came seemed unbearable, but it is out of such depths that we can believe and trust best. There is little room in the heart of a man for implicit faith in God as long as he feels secure within himself.

When temporal possessions are abundant it is human to regard them as sufficient security. When friends are numerous it is tempting to depend upon them. When health is strong it is natural that we should trust our strength. But, when wealth has vanished and friends have gone, we are thrown prostrate and brought to realization that our security must come from another source, and that source is God. Out of that truth someone has well said, our extremity is God's opportunity. I would say that the more destitute we are, the more opportunity we have for implicit trust in God. A man once told me that this attitude is a leap in the dark. I agree. But all plans for the future are a leap in the dark. One man leaps with God; the other man leaps by himself. I, personally, prefer the adventure with God.

I do not understand the infinite power that brought the world into existence but I believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. I do not understand the power that opened a path in the Red Sea, but I believe that the children of Israel were delivered by Moses. I do not understand the justice of capital punishment throughout the Old Testament period, but I believe the justice of him whose providence supported Israel. I do not fully comprehend the meaning of infinite power, of infinite knowledge, of infinite wisdom, of infinite love and goodness, for all that I have ever known had limitations; but I believe that God is unlimited.

I do not understand how just a few drops of blood from the side of the Lord on a Roman cross would open a fountain for all the sins from the garden of Eden to the end of the world; but, Lord, I believe. I do not understand the power by which Jesus rose from the grave and ascended back to Glory. I do not understand the power by which he ascended, or the patience with which he now works in our behalf, nor the strength by which he now is framing mansions in the sky, but I believe that he is now interceding in my behalf in the presence of God; that his angels work in my behalf, that the Spirit intercedes with groanings which cannot be uttered; that he is preparing mansions for me and that he will come again to receive me.

Yes, I believe; and in this faith I find my peace, my hope, my all. For faith is more than something to tell others about. It is God's great light-beam between the darkened life of a human being and the radiant life of Christ; his dynamo between the lifeless lives of men and the energizing Personality of the Savior; it is the silent voice of God upon the listening ears of the soul, for "It is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1); it is the difference between failure and success, for "It is the conviction of things not seen." Faith is a song in the other-

THE MINISTER'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

wise desolate life, strength in a faltering step, light in a darkened life, seeing eyes for the future. Real faith grows sweeter and stronger when trials are more severe, for it is unacquainted with fear. In courtship and marriage, in home and profession, in preaching and practice, in prosperity and adversity, in health and in sickness, among friends and enemies—wherever we may live and whatever may come—this faith is “the victory that overcomes the world” and lives without fear; and “In everything by prayer and supplication” lets the “requests be made known to God,” assured that “The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4). “Lord, we believe,” but “Help thou our unbelief.”

IV. The beauty of a life lived by pure faith is a glory all its own, but living that kind of life is an achievement which few people experience.

1. Catholicism, both Roman and Greek, more especially the former, has clothed itself in so much mysticism and supports itself on so much pure dogma of its own making that “the common people” who “heard him (Christ) gladly” are not given a chance of living this life. In Haifa I saw a Roman Catholic priest administer the ritual of a Catholic baptism to a small child. The priest recited the ritual while the child screamed from fear. A part of the ritual was the priest’s touching his own tongue with his finger, then touching the tongue of the child with the saliva on his finger. Most of the extra-Biblical Catholic dogmas afford little more grounds for personal dynamic faith than this ritual did.

2. The writers of Protestant creeds made an effort to divorce faith from Catholic domination with some success, but they did not succeed in leading the believing life back to the original source. The great apostle Paul said, “Faith

comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), but the creeds held the believers to their own dictations about faith. When believers got completely under the control of these creeds their lives were comparable to a race horse trying to run while wearing the harness of a Barnum and Bailey wagon horse. Christian faith can never do its work under either the conclusions of the rationalist or the dictations of the theologians. Faith must be free to drink for itself from the original fountain. Spirituality is not a blind conformity. It is a surrendered, obedient trust, guided by an enlightened intellect, supported by a sturdy will that is loyal to Christ. It is a life that understands and reproduces the great beauties and glories of Christ in itself.

3. The deep and rich significance of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the true meaning of worship are entirely outside the reach of dogma and creeds.

4. Not only were half of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament aimed at the proper ethical regard for other people's rights and needs, but the New Testament likewise constructs much of the Christian life out of this same consideration. The story of the Good Samaritan is the first one used by most of us when thinking of *teaching* a lesson on being helpful, but spirituality does more than teach on it. A gospel minister was quoted in one of his evening sermons as saying he planned some sermons soon on helping those in need, because "As I went to my afternoon appointment today a man in great need was by the road; many of this church passed by and did not help. I know, because the man was still there when I returned." Spirituality does something about what it knows. It serves before telling others to serve.

5. There is no plainer duty taught than the Great Commission, but most of the world today do not even know it

exists. Most of those who read this book can quote it from memory, but how many of us are doing or have definite plans to do, something definite about fulfilling it? Its wording is clear—"all the world . . . every creature." It would be incorrect to say that nobody has spirituality unless he goes far away and becomes "a missionary," but it is correct to say that a person lacks in spirituality unless he is deeply concerned over getting the Great Commission carried out in its fullness. This is a duty which only a spiritual nature will accept, but the spiritual in a person will accept the duty in some way.

6. Pure worship is an experience of the spirit. Among the expressions met are these—"the spirit of Christ" . . . "They who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" . . . "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." These refer to the real Self. Each life is a garden of qualities, comparable to thorns or flowers. Whether we each cultivate our garden well depends on the amount of spirituality in us. If our restraints and controls have to come from without we lack in our own fine qualities; if we have built a governor in ourselves that control is spiritual. Self-cultivation, then, is a test of our spirituality.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

(Chapter Two)

- I. The basic test for determining whether one is spiritual toward God
 1. Is verbal accuracy in teaching the Bible always proof that the teacher is spiritual?
 2. Is carelessness toward doctrinal accuracy proof of a weak spirituality?

3. To what extent can we consider levity, or entertainment that uses God's name an indication that one lacks in spirituality?
 4. Is the singing of religious songs for amusement or entertainment an indication of a lack in spirituality?
 5. In what ways does a weak love for God indicate a lack of spirituality?
 6. Is it more reverent toward God to speak of "God's laws in science" than it is to speak merely of "the laws of science"?
 7. Is it possible to get some gauge on another's spirituality by the way he discusses nature?
- II. Discuss the best means of developing more spirituality.
1. Can we say accurately that the increase in spirituality in the individual and a growth in reverence for God run parallel in the life?
 2. How can we test ourselves in experiencing an increasing reverence for God's word?
 3. What does it mean to "live by faith"?
 4. Why is it more difficult for most people to live by faith when they have large temporal possessions?
- III. Discuss the hindrance that comes from Catholic dogma and Protestant creeds in developing spirituality.
- IV. Discuss the difference between being baptized as a form or as doctrinal conformity and being baptized from pure spiritual understanding.

CHAPTER III

HIDDEN SHOALS

The presumption of a misplaced emphasis concerning the basic fundamentals most to be guarded in the church—a general analysis.

It should be kept in mind that our discussions are not designed to deal with issues which stand up clear as dangers to Christian faith or Christian ethics. We are dealing with some hidden dangers which are even more often destructive than are those which are more clearly recognized. The present chapter deals with a presumption.

Minds which argue, and argue because they have not met or understood each other are a common tragedy. Often, their differences are not great on fundamentals, yet they grow more and more alienated in their sympathies because they just cannot face each other with a good understanding. It is common under such conditions for both parties to use generalities, and while doing so believe that they are making themselves very clear, whereas they are not. The presumption that "My terms are clear and my words are clear" is just the point. Each person presumed what he is supposed to have supported with evidence.

But this kind of presumption is used only to introduce our study. There are really important issues which grow out of mere presumption concerning what is most important and what is second or third in importance. Jesus Christ, in reality, was killed, as far as the motives of the Jews went, for this difference. There was no difference between him and the existing Jewish sects over the revealed law of Moses. He and they were united on it. The Sadducees and Pharisees, though, had built up a large bulk

of traditions which assembled themselves around that Mosaic law. As long as man kept the letter of the Mosaic code and followed their traditions, he could cheat, charge usury, be unjust and unmerciful without being exposed; and at times even in the Lord's people, these men overlooked the grossest kind of moral perversions. But through all this, there went the presumption that the letter-perfect man was sound before God. It was this point at which the Lord himself came to such sharp words with them. He, in direct contradiction to their beliefs, taught that the spirit of God's law is much more important than the letter-perfect observance of its outward performances.

1. There is the familiar example of a woman caught in the act of adultery. The Jewish leaders rushed her in before the Lord, saying, "We caught her in the very act. Moses said such people should be stoned; what do you advise?" Of course he knew they were not chiefly interested in either honoring Moses or reforming the woman, which alone would have been worthy. He knew that they were using the letter-perfect observance of the law to increase their own self-pride, and in the hope that somewhere along the way they might catch something about which to blame him. To have given them an opportunity of gaining their point or of encouraging them in their false presumptions would have been to share their guilt. So, he turned their presumption into a rebuff by showing them that *people who offer themselves as administrators of the verbal law have the previous obligation to be an example of the spirit in the law.* So, he replied, "Let him that is without sin throw the first stone." No one could claim quite that much for himself, so they left the room one by one. Then the Lord took over the the spirit of the law by reforming the woman and letting her live.

Throughout the Scriptures, especially the New Testament Scriptures, there runs the lesson that anyone who

presumes the right to administer the letter of the law should first himself BE the spirit of the law. And the violation of that spirit is always condemned by the Lord with more severity than is the violation of the letter of the law. One outstanding case further is in Matthew 2, where he praised the Jews for their scrupulous observance of tithing, then condemned them for neglecting the "weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, faith." This can only mean that he considered the spirit of justice, the spirit of mercy, and the spirit of faith more important than the letter-perfect tithing.

I am asked sometimes: "Do you think the church is ready for such and such teaching?" Of course, any well-informed person knows that there is such a thing as the lack on some people's part of a spiritual development which will enable them to appreciate or accept certain truths of the Bible. The fact that some are "babes," not yet "able to receive strong meat" shows this. Moreover, Jesus had "many things" he wanted to teach his disciples, but they were "not able to receive them." There is not, therefore, anything wrong with the ideas as such that people sometimes are not sufficiently developed spiritually to be able to appreciate more advanced spiritual teachings. My judgment is, though, that the hidden danger is not as much the lack of developed taste or ability on the part of a qualified public mind in the church as it is an unprepared teachership to lead in the teaching. Of course, there are still church members, and always will be, who lift a suspicious eyebrow at the mere mention of "spirituality," as if it suggested departure already begun. This they do because the only religion they know is a ritualistic procedure, with no understanding of the true meaning in worship. But the church of today is largely made of people who know that Christianity is a life to be lived in service to other peoples. They know that the two billions of people in the

world not American citizens were made for something other than to be a circle of under-privileged outlying sections for us to be surrounded by, and to pity. They have learned that a foreign policy by the United States has to be something more than opposition to Communistic Russia. Whether they know, or claim to know, many of the important answers concerning how or when, they do know for certain that an effective foreign policy has to be also positive and militant for the right. And to do this, it has to show a spirit of positive helpfulness toward other nations, not just for political advantage or gain, but out of a true spirit of good neighbors. These same people also know that the world's best thing—Christianity—just has to be more than mere opposition to certain forms of conduct, or certain supposed errors of teaching. To be worth all that Calvary stands for, it has to be positive, militant for larger service; it has to be constructive. They also know that they have an obligation to share in the sacrifices necessary to render this service. They do not claim, many of them, to know all about "procedures," or "methods." They do stand ready, though, for sober, scriptural thinking on these things. To challenge their interest and cooperation, it will take more than a rehash of "why," or "how." It will take more than preaching and writing against denominationalism, and modernism. They already fairly well know the reasons why those things are wrong. But here, again, we come upon the need for positive thinking with them. As well as knowing what is not right, they want to know what is right; they have plenty of money and training that they are willing to put into works and thinking of that sort. I am confident that brethren over the country are ready, prepared, and waiting for any teaching that is scriptural, constructive, and challenging. But they rightly want it to be simple, clear and in the open, with no covered motives or hidden implications. To win confidence

and gain support, it must be free of section, group, and personal prejudice. It must not only not bear a label of pretense; its content must show sincerity of purpose.

Christian people in general at this time will carefully consider any thinking which gives evidence of these qualities; and within time, they will give it support in large measure.

I. Special, specific issues, versus the Christian Spirit in dealing with issues.

This discussion is not intended to minimize the importance of issues or of dealing with them. Something important is at work always when two people or two groups become estranged in any measure. Whether the supposed cause of their estrangement is real or unreal, important or relatively unimportant, the estrangement itself is very important. In a world where God's Son died for perfect harmony among men, it is important—extremely important—that there is estrangement. So, issues and their causes are important. Dealing with them also is important. They cannot be ignored out of reality.

1. The spirit of treatment often has as much to do with results as the treatment itself. One of the first bits of advice given me as a preacher was from an old gospel preacher, who himself had been regarded as "very hard" in his preaching. He was often called to arbitrate in church troubles. Once he was invited and went, but his train was late. The audience was assembled when he arrived, and impatiently waiting. He immediately took his seat and asked who had complaints, and what. When different ones had expressed themselves rather freely he, in his characteristic frankness, said, "It looks to me like a lot of you are going to hell if you do not repent." Within seconds, new blood entered the discussion; inflamed speeches were

made, some of them saying, "If my father does not kill him I will." At that point, he told me, he realized that his harsh words had set off the inflamed passions which showed themselves so bitterly. Thereupon he arose and began a series of kind observations, designed to cool the fevered feeling and kindle more Christian feelings. Soon he called for prayer, and he himself led it. At the close of the prayer, he again opened the meeting for discussion, only to see that the minds present had entered upon another road of thought entirely. No doubt, it has been the experience of most who read this to sit in an audience listening to a sermon, or to read a paper in some journal, which went along severely condemning something, but it was felt while listening or reading that the author was manifesting a spirit that was more un-Christian than was the thing he was condemning. Many of us have seen parents grab children, shake them, slap them, then shove them across the room sprawling on the floor, then we have listened to them screaming with pain while the parent gave them a sharp lecture, all the while flavoring it with the tone, "I have to punish you because I love you." Neither the child nor the listener believed that punishment was prompted by love. We have heard sermons and read articles which made the same claims but left on us the same impression of insincerity and unreality.

2. Possibly no other single emotion prompts so much bad spirit as prejudice. It is so subtle, so deceptive, so cunning. It speaks in soothing tones to the person who has it. If his prejudice is racial, it talks to him about the low estate of others and of his superior deservings, and who does not like to believe he is toward the top of something important? If his prejudice is against some individual, especially if envy is working, something in him talks about the shortcomings of the other person, affirms that he is much less gifted, and says that life is not break-

ing things evenly. It may even tell him that the other person is political and needs taking down a few notches. Whatever may be the immediate message that prejudice whispers, it is certain that its effects on the envious person are going to be bad. Some kind of effort is likely to begin toward lowering the esteem which others have for the person he envies.

Under prejudice, men go about labeling each other with injurious titles which they do not deserve. They call each other "unsound," and "soft," and "radical," and "Sectarian," and "Modernists," when those charges are untrue. Of course such things are true of some people at times; but all of us have seen men who did not deserve these injurious titles though they had been hung on them.

The often overlooked tragedy in these sins is not primarily that some person has merely been accused of something untrue about him. The real tragedy is the fact that the accusers in such matters have locked themselves out of heaven by these gross injustices. Yet, who has ever been tried and disfellowshipped in a church for being unjust, or lacking in faith? Why do we disfellowship people for perversion of the letter of the law but seldom or never do so for the violation of its spirit? The answer is simple—church members have been taught by example, if not in so many words, that the letter of the law is more important than its spirit. Souls are wrecked on this shoal of misplaced emphasis.

II. A second mistake in this general area is treating the symptoms instead of the diseases.

1. Doctors who would come to the sick person, sit down and lecture a high fever would soon be without a practice. Wise doctors diagnose the cause which produced the fever, then go about working on the disease.

2. A wise football coach has one thing only in mind when he makes up plays and gives signals to his team. There is a line that he wants his men to cross. But eleven other men, coached by wise men, are directly between them and that line. The one concern is solving and overcoming that other team. The coach does not lecture his signals which did not work or the weight of his own team. He goes about building other plays and getting heavier and more skilled players for his team. He knows that when he gets weight, skill and coordination in his team, they will cross the goal line.

3. Many worthy works have failed because they were not wisely led. Many church members will be lost not because they wanted to sin but because those who pretended to be helpers did them more harm than good by the manner in which they tried.

Most of the treatment of sin in the church consists of listing some things which the "young people are doing" or which "some of the members do," and using a few Sunday mornings to give those members some good "scorchings." It may even be that some member is withdrawn from for his indulgence. It may be true that some members should be withdrawn from at times. But there still remains a disease in the Christian body. The blood stream of the church is affected, because "When one member suffers, we all suffer with it"; and the body as such is not cured until the disease is removed. Curing a disease consists in killing the germ of the disease itself.

4. There is never a case of church discipline but that the church first had the Christian duty to offer the sinful member leadership in better indulgence so that it would not commit the sin for which it is being disciplined. Most of the things for which young people are often condemned

would be avoided if the church offered them first a leadership in thought and experience calculated to offset the desire for that sinful experience. Sinning is somewhat like satisfying one's self in other ways—it is engaged in to meet a personal need or desire of the moment. Drinking is for that purpose; hobbies are for that purpose. Some people, therefore, have their lives so full of business that they have no time for hobbies. Some even have no time for religious thought. If their lives were sufficiently filled with the joys of Christian experiences, there would be less attraction in the satisfactions which momentary sins give. It is the duty of persons who have traveled the road ahead and know the enticements which pull aside, to give leadership and afford indulgences which will fill the younger lives with offsetting wholesome indulgences.

III. This course will also include trying to create a more spiritual appetite in the members also providing more wholesome activities.

1. A certain young preacher entered the pulpit set on preaching worldliness out of the church. He severely condemned the ladies present who wore short sleeves, short skirts and low-necked dresses. He condemned all kinds of make-up on their faces; he condemned the curls in their hair. To him it was all an effort to appeal to a worldly impulse in human taste. At the same time, he wore a necktie, nicely shined shoes, well groomed hair, a well-pressed suit of clothes. Out of the pulpit he enjoyed softball and dominoes. Efforts of that sort can never even begin to fortify people against sin. There is a true story by one of my friends about a sermon he preached on Sunday morning. He pleaded with members to return Sunday nights, because their absence discouraged the preacher, reflected on the church and might endanger their souls. After the benediction one of the men who always had "an explanation" came up to explain that "You just put so

much meat in your morning sermons I cannot digest more than one a day." My friend replied, "Your real difficulty is not your digestion; it is your appetite." How often it is that Christians have very puny appetites spiritually! It requires full days to satisfy them in making as much money as they want to make each week; it requires hours at night to play games as long as they want to play; it takes 18 or more holes of golf to satisfy them; at least one show a week, maybe more, is necessary to meet their show needs; they want both morning and evening paper to satisfy their appetite for current events; they read several journals in their profession or business because they are so anxious to keep abreast with thought there. But in spiritual matters, how small is their appetite!

2. Wrecked faith, wrecked love for God, and wrecked confidence in religion itself come often from the failure to know these things and to place the emphasis where it should be placed. Those who say most about being loyal and about "dangers of departure" sometimes seem to have the least understanding of these prior needs. Yet, those prior needs are the basic demands in fulfilling all those great Scripture teachings about "hungering and thirsting for righteousness," and "growing to the full measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

IV. Among the Christian experiences most often mistreated in this respect is baptism.

At any average religious service the audience and the preacher are clock-conscious. They cannot begin until a given time for the people are not there, and the benediction, in the main, must not be after a certain minute, for the hearts of the audience will not be there. Each "item" of procedure is fairly well geared to the time so that a person can "go to church" this morning and set an engagement for 1:00 p.m., fairly well assured that he will be through

with worship, have his lunch and be able to meet for the conference at 1:00. But the sermon on a given day especially touched a half dozen young people, so they came to be baptized. The preacher remembers the time everybody expects the benediction. So, he announces the names of those who came forward, asks each one to stand and, one by one, he asks them the usual question and receives the answer. He may say to each one, "God bless you for making that good confession," or he may wait to say it to all of them at once. He may even ask all the group the question at once. It even sometimes happens that the preacher will say, "We shall all be going very soon but if any of you feel that you must go before the baptizing there is no embarrassment for you to go now while we prepare for the baptizing." Many are the ways in which the sacredness in baptism is completely ignored.

A spiritual understanding of baptism is much more than the fact that it is not sprinkling or pouring; much more than the mere fact that it is a burial in water. The person being baptized must realize that he is being buried into death to sin, being transferred into Christ, that he is losing all his guilt for sin, and that his desires and enjoyments thereafter must embrace things worthy to be called "a new life," as his body is raised from the baptismal grave. The baptized person should be led to understand that, as the fleshly body of Christ lost its physical, fleshly nature when it arose, we must rise from baptism completely changed in our desire, enjoyments, and outlook, from all that is unworthy to all that is worthy.

Or again, let the subject be "worship." I was a grown young man and had begun to preach before I knew that worship in songs included anything very important except not having a mechanical musical instrument in accompaniment. Not until I had preached several years did I know the real meaning of worship to God. Those who say, "In-

strumental music makes the singing better" reveal that their understanding of worship in song is much limited to the pleasing effects of musical sounds on their ears. One wonders how many in the churches today have never grown beyond this stage. Some want cavorting music, or they want "faster singing," or they want to "learn some new songs," or they want a "new song book." While all this goes on the preaching on worship is much limited to "Thou shalt not have mechanical instruments in the worship." Surely, there must be no such innovations; but it is fully as sinful to sing gospel songs without a worshipful heart as it is to bring in the unauthorized instrument and sing with a worshipful heart while it plays. This neglect of a most important spiritual aspect is responsible in large measure for much of the spiritual poverty in the church.

V. **The same principle belongs in a study of the Lord's supper.** Our teaching has been, much out of necessity, against denominational errors about the supper and upon the Bible requirements for meeting every Lord's day. The result has been that people who hate each other sit in opposite sides of the house and take the Lord's supper never knowing they have sinned; others hasten on their pleasure trips and pause a few minutes in a strange place to "take the emblems"; yet others take it, proud that they have not missed for several years. None of these see a bleeding, suffering Lord or feel the sting of conscience for their own unworthiness. They do not interpret their experience as imposing on them an obligation to carry salvation to others, as others have brought it to them. Their entire understanding consists in knowing it must be done every Lord's day, that denominations are wrong in doing as they do about it; and that the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is wrong. They never experience an emotion of true worship during the entire period. Our emotional experience is inadequate unless it contains a deep sense of

tender love for Christ who has done so much for us. The individual's understanding is inadequate unless it is clear on the doctrinal errors on the subject; and the spiritual content of the worshipper is equally inadequate if it lacks the warm glow of appreciation. The word "worship" comes from a Greek word meaning "kiss toward." When Christ said, "Do this in memory of me," he was thinking of the complete human self as it pours itself into a period of joyous, grateful recognition of his sacrificial death. Once when I preached along this line, a man afterward said, "I guess I just haven't been converted; I go to church just as I go to my bank. Inwardly I feel no different." One wonders how many other people have that same experience, all because their teachings have not trained them better.

In all this a hidden shoal of inadequate understanding of spiritual values wrecked souls which could have matured admirably if they had been led by a more spiritual leadership.

Closing Suggestions.

When a man is about to write a paper or preach a sermon, he should first ask himself a few questions. Included in the list should be at least the following:

1. "Is what I am about to say important enough to justify the time about to be used?" If it is a sermon and there are 500 people present, the speaker consumes quite a number of human hours when he speaks forty-five minutes; something has to be very important to justify consuming that much time at once, not to mention the results, whatever they turn out to be, after the sermon is delivered.

2. "Under the existing circumstances, is what I am about to say likely to reach those who need it?" While admitting that there is some value in a sermon or a paper when heard or read, to even those who already believe what

the author says, all of us likely can recall hearing sermons which were very boring because they merely constituted a rehash of borrowed materials and they were only thoughts which really belonged to people who, it was known beforehand, almost certainly would not be present. If judged by the amount of good done to those present, in comparison with the amount of good some other sermon could have done them, the time spent was almost entirely wasted.

3. "Am I the person, and is this the time, to deliver this message?" Again, all of us have heard and read messages which under other conditions, or by other persons, would have done great good; but under existing conditions little good, and probably much harm, could be expected. One of the Lord's pathetic statements says, "I have many things to say unto you but you are not able to receive them." New Testament readers of his biography come across many statements which were misunderstood, because his hearers were unprepared to understand them. Moreover, the twentieth chapter of the Acts tells of Paul's determination to enter the temple of Diana and speak but he was restrained by his brethren because his audience not only would have refused his words but likely would have killed him. On the apostle's former journey he wanted to turn aside and preach in Ephesus but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit because something else was more important in the judgment of God. Writers and preachers in all generations are as much under the wishes and judgments of God as the apostles were, though not under the miraculous direction. They should be as desirous of pleasing his will as they would be if he were speaking to them in person daily. Much strife is started and many ill feelings generated which could have been avoided if those in public places had exercised more discretion about the timeliness of

what is about to be said, as well as whether the person is the proper one to say it.

4. There is yet at least one other question of much importance which should be correctly answered before one begins delivering his thoughts to others. It is, "Am I prepared in knowledge and motive to deliver these thoughts?" Many ill-advised efforts have come under the observation of us all wherein the speaker was wading in water much too deep for him. He splashed and scattered water all over others (to carry the figure further) but he just never did get any real swimming done. His manner and his struggle was much that of a child who has learned a few things about swimming; who, in the midst of his self-admiring efforts, cries to those on the bank, "How am I doing?" Of course, when the swimming is literal and is being done by a beginner, we admire the efforts; but when the scene changes to the gospel pulpit and the actor is a preacher who thinks he is doing something great, whereas he is just totally unprepared for his job, the whole scene becomes tragic. Speakers and writers should be as exacting of themselves as they are of others. If perfectly honest, they can measure themselves with at least a reasonable portion of wisdom.

The motive is much more difficult to judge than the subject matter. Paul is a good example of judging his own motives. As one reads the First Corinthian letter he feels the warmth of love running through it; but Paul did not respond to that impulse when he first heard of the troubles in the Corinthian church. He was minded to go over and lay on the rod, he says, "But I stayed away to spare you." Paul worked on himself until his emotion changed from the desire to punish them to a yearning grief for them. So, in that Second Corinthian letter he says that "I wrote unto you out of much anxiety of heart and with many tears." When he felt the warm tears of sorrow for their

lost estate running down his cheeks, he was ready to begin his efforts of correction. Much more good would be done by preachers and writers if they would judge themselves and their preparedness in this respect.

The importance most to be considered in these reflections is that failure to consider them duly constitutes some of the many hidden shoals on which destruction takes place. If a ship is sailing far at sea and there looms high above the surface a large rock, it gives its own danger signal to the captain. The dangerous rocks are those covered under the surface. James mentions the destructive work of the tongue, as it "sets on fire the wheels of nature," then he informs us that "It is set on fire of hell." Who ever heard a person in some linguistic tirade say, "I, in all I am saying, have given myself over to the influence of hell"? More likely the speaker affirmed that it hurt him to say all he was saying, and that he was thus speaking because he so much loved the audience. At times he even said, maybe, that he had much rather someone else, who could have done so much better, had been the speaker; but the less gullible saw the truth about him. The tragedy comes in the fact that he wrecked his own soul on the hidden rock of self-deceit; and he wrecked the souls of many others on the shoals of misguided judgments.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. Discuss the importance of "a meeting of minds."
 1. What does it mean for "minds to meet"?
 2. Name some things which keep minds from meeting.
 3. What can you suggest that will help?
 4. Discuss the devastating results of discussions when minds fail to meet.

II. Discuss the importance of issues and of dealing with them.

1. Does an unimportant issue ever take on the appearance of importance? Why?
2. What importance should be placed on the spirit of dealing with them?
3. Discuss the importance of a good spirit in sermons and in Bible class teaching.
4. Show how prejudice and envy can be a hidden shoal with much damage.

III. Symptoms and diseases.

1. Show the difference between symptoms and disease: in sickness; in church problems.
2. Name some ways in which we could treat merely the symptoms, and never touch the real disease in a given sin.
3. Is hate a symptom or a disease?
4. Is envy a symptom or a disease?
 - (1) Name some ways in which envy and jealousy will hurt.
 - (2) What is the best way for people to overcome envy?
 - (3) How can we best deal with envy?

IV. Give your judgment about the duty of the church to offer offsetting leadership that is calculated to overcome these evils.

1. Do you agree that a congregation which disciplines members has the prior obligation of leader-

ship which, if followed, would have prevented the sins which they now discipline?

2. To what extent does this obligation exist?
3. How broad is this responsibility?

V. Developing more spiritual hunger.

1. Do you agree that there has to be a desire for improvement before the improvement can come?
2. Christ blessed those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Can you suggest ways that the congregation can help people develop that hunger?
3. Is the proper effort now being made to develop that spiritual hunger?

VI. Baptism.

1. What does it mean to be "baptized into Christ"?
2. What does it mean to be baptized into Christ's death?
3. Should there be more preparation on the spiritual meaning of baptism as well as on the correct form?

VII. Discuss the necessary preparation for true worship as we sing, pray, take the Lord's Supper.

VIII. In what way can an inadequate preparation and understanding become a hidden shoal of danger to our religious lives in these matters?

IX. Name and discuss the questions a person would be wise to ask himself before undertaking a religious task.

1. List those questions by name and number.
2. In what way does inadequate consideration of these become a treacherous, destructive shoal?

CHAPTER IV

ROOTS WHICH FEED SPIRITUALITY

If the word, "Spirituality," on first consideration, should have a measure of the intangible to some, there should be a quick and challenging compensation in the knowledge that it contains all the major qualities which underlie pure Christian living and afford permanent happiness. There are definite roots, or fountains, which feed, and which are indispensable to, its well-being.

I. Love is a root that greatly feeds spirituality.

But love can be both spiritual and unspiritual, even anti-spiritual. In a revival meeting in Japan once, I was speaking from the passage which says we must love God with all the soul, mind and strength, and neighbor as we love self. In the course of remarks it was said, "I have to love others as I love myself in order to be saved myself." During the hour of questions which always followed a sermon, a college student quoted my statement, then asked, "If you love me as much as you love yourself in order to be saved yourself, is that not self love?" He was told in reply that when love is viewed in the light which his question implied his view would be correct, but that Christians are to love even enemies for the sake of the enemies themselves, as well as to love neighbors for their own sakes, and the answer satisfied him. It is evident, though, that love can be very selfish, therefore not Christian or saving in its nature. Loving others for the benefit that it will bring us is not pure spiritual love. Loving and obeying God out of sheer fear for his wrath or for the sole purpose of one's own good is not spiritual love. But the love which responds to his love on the same level as it is received is spiritual.

Christ loved the world before the world knew he existed. He loved and tried to woo it while it yet hated him. He

suffered and died, praying for God to forgive the world which killed him. That was spirituality at its best. Our spirituality is of poor quality as long as we love only for the profit that loving will bring to us. But love is spiritual when it extends to others for their sake, in the hope that our love will benefit them. Only when it is that kind can love produce happiness and communion with God. If a man and a woman suddenly decide they deeply love each other and marry, it would be expected that the love of each would be very solicitous of the other. But happiness would be destroyed if the woman should discover that her husband's love was based mainly on what he wanted her to be worth to him, and that he was sharing his love to others for the same reason. In proportion as his love is unselfish toward her, the richness of his love would make her happy.

Christ and his apostles have said much on this subject in relation to love for God and Christ. "Love not the world nor the things of the world" (I John 2:15). "If you love me you will do my biddings" (John 14:15). When the Lord required that he be first in our affections, he was forbidding a divided love. Only thus can we affirm that our love for him is spiritual. But as love grows more sincere and genuine, the spiritual life grows stronger and richer. Whether between the husband and wife or between God and the Christian, the joy of possessing and being possessed is the height of bliss. Never is bliss more severely wounded than when it is believed that the one loved is being shared with others the same as with the partner. In like manner, a love in the Christian that is shared between God and the world is called an adulterous love! But when love is pure, unmixed and uncontaminated, fervent and unwavering, its own very spiritual nature will build rapidly the life in which it lives.

Most people have set standards by which they judge others. Their expectations of others are rather fixed. The

list of expectations is often long, and we are disappointed when they do not live up to those standards. But even when our expectations of them are good, our own spirituality is not proved by that. What we expect of ourselves toward them is the test of our spirituality much more than what we expect of them toward us. When we begin requiring of ourselves that we give up much for their salvation; when we begin preferring that they be blessed more than we want to be blessed; when we bring ourselves into judgment quicker than we bring others into judgment for mistakes; these will be marks of spiritual qualities in us. Bernard Shaw once said, "Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated." As an adequate antidote, Christ said, "As I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 16:27). The mistake should not be made of thinking that spirituality is merely a goodness within, which consists of not being positively sinful. It is true that the spiritual character does eschew evil and choose the good; but it goes much farther. Its goodness is not satisfied to hoard the blessings of God in its own life; it shares those blessings with others. Spirituality and dedication, therefore, are closely related. Neither of them is content to dole out what it can spare of time, or money, or affections. Both of them want others to have at least an equal share of every good thing. We may well, therefore, say that spirituality is the genuineness of character which shares, and dedication is the unwavering element in the constancy of this desire and effort.

At the expense of seeming negative at this point, it might be appropriately observed that possibly the greatest weakness in today's Christian faith is the fact that the sharing is not sufficient and that the constance is not pronounced enough. There is great need for a large spiritual awakening, which will prove its sincerity by an enlarged generosity and a more fervent constancy in effort. A cru-

sade within each heart should go on, and a similar crusade in mass for others should be made. The man who said more about spirituality than all the other apostles was the most crusading servant since the ascension of the Christ. Pure love will feed these qualities very richly.

II. Bible faith feeds the spiritual life.

Though this statement is true, it is equally true that there are many manifestations of supposed faith which do not feed spiritual communion with God, because they are subterfuge.

1. There is a rationalistic faith, which is more a set of rationalized conclusions about faith than pure faith in God. It says that we should not claim anything that we cannot satisfy by reason; that the mind is wholly capable of confirming all that is worthy of acceptance. The rationalist, therefore, questions pure faith in God, rejects all that seems unreasonable. Reason, thereby, becomes in substance a god in the life of the rationalist, because reason is final in its conclusions.

2. There is a sectarian, theological faith, which is more a blind acceptance of dogmatic statements than real faith itself. Reason has no room to accept the doctrine expressed by Isaiah when he said, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. . . He was wounded for OUR transgressions"; and "By HIS stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). Theological dogmas have wandered all over the realm of imagination from the assumptions of total depravity, through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and impart the power to believe. Its dogmatic utterances *about* the atonement are as much a basis of belief as Bible statements themselves are. And loyalties sometimes are more pronounced in the sectarian believers for those dogmas than for the plain Bible teachings. Rationalistic thinking

has neither room nor patience for the Bible doctrine of the atonement, and theological dogmas can accept it only after tampering with it.

Though pure faith will reason at times in its path of trust; though it may express itself at all times with finality, the basis of these manifestations is much apart from the same manifestations on the part of rationalistic or theological faith. Neither theological nor rationalistic faith can make progress on the purely spiritual level.

3. Spiritual faith exalts the authority of Christ above reason and dogmatics under all circumstances. Like Abraham, it adventures into the unknown, and the formerly unheard of. Like Moses, it turns the back on thrones and ivory palaces, and it finds more pleasures in suffering for a righteous cause for a season than in having more glamorous things. Like Job, it accepts the experiences which are entirely unjust by the world's standards, assured that, "When he has refined me I shall come forth as gold." Like the Lord himself, it empties Self, lays itself on altars of sacrifice for even those who would kill it. Like Paul, it counts all such things as joy for the sake of Christ. A faith which moves on this basis is in daily communion with God. It consciously depends on him for its strength, devoutly assured that God will supply the needed strength and wisdom. The total life of the individual, therefore, and thereby, are constantly changed into the likeness of the Lord himself. It accepts and interprets life's experiences with the attitude of respect for divine, overruling Providence, believing that God is working the total good of all by the experiences which daily come. This yielding spirit is spirituality, and the daily walk by faith helped develop it.

III. Prayer feeds spirituality.

There are those who tell us that the only answer to prayer is psychological. They say that our desire for some-

thing leads us to talk with others about it; that this talk increases our desire for it; that this increased desire increases our efforts again; and that we then take the matter up with God in what we call prayer. They tell us that our own interest by that time has heightened to the strongest possible effort on our part. And if we do not accomplish what we desired we say, "It was not God's will"; but if we do accomplish it, we say that "God answered our prayer."

Certainly a person whose interest in something is sufficient to take his cause to God is largely interested; he will work to gain his desired thing; certainly he stands ready to be used much in the answer to his prayer if necessary. Often, too, in answering prayer, God uses those who prayed. But there is an element of answer to prayer beyond all human power or agency. Hannah was able to move God in her behalf and cause him to give her conceiving power; Hezekiah's tears and prayers moved God to lengthen his life fifteen years; the prayers of Christian people brought an angel from heaven to unlock prison doors and loose Peter (Acts 12). Paul believed that people could pray their worries away and bring peace to their troubled hearts (Phil. 4:4-7); the writer of Hebrews believed we can "come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy to help us in the time of need" (Heb. 4:16). James believed that those who lack wisdom can obtain it from God through prayer (James 1:5). Paul requested, "With all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:18). The answer to a prayer like that is bound to enlarge one's spiritual stat-

ure. Daily communion with God in this way is sure to refine the soul, cleanse the spirit, purify the mind. Psalm 34 calls God's people before the courts of heaven to account for the ways in which we seek happiness. The question is put: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" Then all men immediately are pointed to God in prayer: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7). "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers" (I Peter 3:12). . . . "The Lord is nigh unto them of a broken heart" (Psa. 34:18).

Peter quotes from this psalm (I Peter 3:10-12). He asks, "Who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?" Verses 1-9 have directed us through many trying experiences, then Peter leads us to prayer. "His ears are open to our prayers," he says. Recently I had a letter from a friend who has been through some very trying times the last few years. Much praying has been done. The letter closed by saying, "I certainly have grown up through all this." And in very truth, the Bible writers, in calling us to prayer in all that we experience, are just about saying to us, "Grow up spiritually on your knees in prayer to God." I would not want to commit very much of my interests to any man who does not believe in prayer, its refining effects, and its answer from God. But I would trust everything to a man who settles everything in prayer.

The prisoner in Rome said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend

with all the saints the breadth, length, depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19). What soul could possibly be so sickly as not to be developed spiritually by that prayer? The ultimate on earth for all Christian development is—"That you may attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13); but this attainment was to come from prayer by Paul. Moreover, we are to pray for kings (I Timothy 2:1-2). How could one grow larger in soul and mind than he is in prayer, believing his God will direct kings to a favorable decision because that Christian prayed?

It should be kept in mind, however, that there is much difference between the use of prayer as a ceremony and its use as an act of faith; the results are much different if one prayer is largely an experiment but another is an experience. Just imagine the growth one would experience during a year if he should read carefully each morning the Beatitudes, then earnestly pray that God may develop those qualities in him. Name them over slowly—Poor in spirit . . . Purity . . . Meekness . . . Peace-making . . . Sympathetic mourning with others . . . hunger and thirst for more individual righteousness . . . Bravely enduring persecutions for righteousness' sake. It is a very different prayer when one names these over one by one, then prays, "Help me this day, O God, to improve my own life in each of these qualities."

Or, again, slowly read over the model prayer in Matthew 6. It begins by saying, "After this manner pray ye." The emphasis is on the "*manner*." The manner in that prayer is:

1. Complete reverence and gratitude toward God as Father;

2. Complete trust in God for every daily need—unworried, untroubled;
3. Complete dependence on his mercy, trusting it fully, and practicing it ourselves;
4. Unfaltering trust that God will lead and guide each hour of the day;
5. Unwavering obedience—"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

How can a life pray in that spirit continuously without growing to great spiritual stature?

These spiritual perceptions and maturities are within the reach of every Christian. Imagine the power of an entire church which has developed to these heights.

Though it is the responsibility of all Christians to develop these spiritual awakenings in each Self, it might well be considered that the time and reading matter available to him gives the minister of the gospel primary responsibility to manifest these attainments in himself first. Timothy was expected to show himself an example of the right things; and he was expected to give no occasion for just blame on him. Few things will give more strength to a church than for the other members to think within themselves, "Our minister is the walking example of all that I wish I could be."

IV. By way of conclusion and summary, allow a few more observations. Spirituality is not some strange magic or something unreal; it is not an imaginary abstraction. It is the total character qualities of Jesus Christ, gradually learned from the Bible, and constantly transferred by the Christian to himself, or herself, so that the Christian's life represents well the character which was so wonderfully portrayed in the Christ himself. This character is

not obtained by a miracle or abruptly in any sense. It is fed, developed, and matured through three channels—a constantly growing love for God and all men; a growing trust in God and seeking for a closer walk with him; and an increasing awareness of one's own inadequacy and unworthiness, accompanied by an equal development in one's reliance upon God to supply all that we need to make us as we should be. This three-fold development is the Christian's spiritual life. Each Christian should pray for God to develop these qualities in him.

There is a large difference between a teacher who holds classes regularly and examines students strictly for \$400 a month and one who does his best teaching because he wants to do a job well and is paid \$400 a month for his labors of love.

Spirituality in a life is somewhat like a great reservoir with many outlets. We, in the use of those outlets, may enjoy them so much that we forget the reservoir, and let it run dry.

We may see somebody exercise what we consider to be great faith, much patience, and indulging in liberal sacrifices for good works, and we may compliment that person. It is good to encourage such things. But knowing how that person developed those graces is quite another thing. Such virtues have to be fed daily as from a great reservoir. That total something which we call spirituality is the reservoir, it is replenished daily by the qualities of love, faith and prayer.

In my first local church ministry, a young married woman came to me for advice. She had placed membership in the congregation, having married a man who was not a church member. We had met as young people in another city before either of us married; her father was a

church elder of long standing. I had stayed in their home overnight several times. She asked me, "How can I learn to enjoy my church going? I want to be faithful, but when I was growing up I promised myself that I would do as I pleased in such matters when I got grown. I am grown now and independent, but I just do not enjoy my church going; there is something rebellious in my feelings all the time, and I really do not want it that way," she said. On inquiring, I learned that her father had scolded her often as a child and forced her to attend "Sunday School." Regardless of other matters he had forced her to attend all the public services of the congregation, which really did not have services or any other arrangements very appealing to people of her age. As the years have passed, I have met many church members, of all ages, who have the same problem. An elder of the church once told me, "It's all right for the rest of you to come back tonight, but I'll not be here; I've done what the Lord told me to do in coming and breaking bread, so I am going to stay at home and rest the rest of the day so I can do a good day's work tomorrow."

If we desire to be impressed with just how extensive this weakness really is in its many manifestations, just attend a dozen different congregations and listen to the promotion work necessary to induce the members to come back to the evening services, prayer meetings, Sunday morning Bible study. Listen to the admonitions from the pulpit for the members to attend the revival meetings and otherwise to show their loyalties unto the Lord. What is the basic weakness which makes all this necessary? It is common for a church to be hard put for some man who is a good public announcer, because they feel that his announcements maybe will increase the attendance of the members better. Why?

The basic weakness in all this is the lack of spirituality in the lives of the members. Spiritual values in the church are somewhat similar to physical values in the home. A husky, robust boy does not need to be promoted to his mother's dinner table after a day of hard work. His normal appetite does the promotion there. Or, if we need a change of illustration, we could not imagine a man who loves his family and his home, who would need to be promoted to return each night and spend the night with his family in their home. There are family loyalties, longings, devotions, affections which automatically direct the man home when the time arrives, and which direct a growing boy to the dinner table. If our spiritual lives are as healthy and loyal as they should be we shall not need to be promoted on matters which pertain to the welfare of Christianity. That reservoir referred to already takes care of all such matters.

How do we build this reservoir? A good man told me once, "I cannot say that I get any thrill out of going to church. I go every Sunday, and I do not want to miss. I feel it my duty to go, but I cannot say that I specially enjoy attending." No one needs to be told that he was one who seldom attended any other functions of the church. Promote all you may, he just seldom came.

But most people, likely, want to be better than that. There may not be any way to outline some daily rules which, if followed, will guarantee this development, but suggestions can be made that will help.

The Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, has the universal acclaim of being the greatest existing document. It is great, not for its profound philosophic reasonings, nor for its shrewd delineations of difficult religious conundrums, for it deals with none of those. This sermon is great because of its mastery of cultural values and its simple pres-

entation of daily character qualities. But this sermon begins with soul culture in its relationships to others—purity of heart, hunger and thirst for personal righteousness, peacemaking, meekness.

Spirituality is not alone a readiness to express itself in the right ways outwardly. It is also a receptiveness for all that is high and holy, because it has been taking into itself the qualities of true greatness for years. When God sent an angel to Mary and told her she was highly favored of God, therefore he wanted her to become the human mother of his Son by a miracle, he was not trying to change or improve Mary; he was announcing to her the attainments of her past life and the suitability of her personality for something wonderful through her. It was all a high honor to her because it complimented her with a readiness to go with God in all that he wanted her to do, and that readiness had been demonstrated by her in the past as a virgin. The queenly beauty of her pure, magnificent soul had been long seen by angels and God himself. When she was unaware, God had been observing her choices in life, which built her character so wonderfully. "Hail, Mary, thou art highly favored of God," was a crowning recognition on the part of God in a life which had lived voluntarily on earth so wonderfully well. When other girls had let themselves down to the level of unworthiness in one way or another, Mary had walked still along the mountain ranges of maiden purity; while others had been ruled by vanity and pride, Mary had cherished meekness and humility in her heart; while others had tried to win by appealing to less worthy impulses in men, Mary had leaned on the securing goodness of God and had been happy with believing he would reward true values. Her faith was rewarded—"Hail, Mary, thou art highly favored of God!" That confidence in God and its willingness to wait; the certainty that God in due time would come, and the willing-

ness to have whatever part he may name for her—that was her spirituality.

God never intended that this attainment in Mary should be deified, or worshipped by other human beings. He intended, on the contrary, to hold it before all other maidens of all time as an inducement to them to pattern their lives after her example of true greatness. Angelic acclaim of human beings on earth today may never be heard by human ears, as we today have never heard "Hail, Mary," from Gabriel's own mouth; but the faith in maidens today which leads them to believe God said it to Mary of old has the same rewarding effects in heaven, when they live as Mary lived, though they may never hear angels say to them, "Thou art highly favored of God."

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

I. Love as a root which feeds spirituality

1. Trees have large and long roots which feed life into the body of the tree.
 - (1) Do you believe that love is one root, or source, which feeds spirituality?
 - (2) Can you word a short definition of love?
 - (3) Explain how this love increases one's spirituality.
 - (4) Will the increase of love in a life increase one's spirituality?
 - (5) Name some types of love which will not increase spirituality.
 - (6) Clearly distinguish between selfish love and unselfish love.

2. Give some Bible passages on the requirement that Christians love others.
3. Based on what it takes for marital love to produce happiness, show how there can be no real religious happiness except as one's love for God is pure and unpretended.
4. Read First John 2, 3, 4 then show from what you learned how and why pure love for others is a source of happiness, also why it is impossible to be really happy unless we do love others as we are commanded to love them.
5. What would you suggest as a pattern for each one to follow in developing this love for God and other people?

II. Faith as a source for increasing spirituality

1. Can you give a definition of faith that is simple and understandable? Try it.
2. Give some Bible examples of faith and show how they contained the elements which you put into your definition of faith.
3. Explain why reason and faith are not cooperative in helping spirituality.
4. What is dogmatic faith? (You may prefer to call it theological faith.)
5. On what is this type of faith more often based?
6. How and why does real faith feed and increase the spirituality in a person?

III. Prayer as a source for increasing spirituality

1. What is the difference between using prayer as an experience and prayer as an experiment?

2. Does the Bible present prayer as an experiment or an experience?
3. In what sense is prayer psychological?
4. Can you give Bible examples which show that God answers prayer which goes beyond the psychological phase and which also is given directly from God, independent of all human agency?
5. What New Testament teachings do you recall on the subject of the direct answer of prayer?
6. Why does one's understanding and use of prayer in daily life reveal so clearly the extent of one's development in spirituality?
7. What would you suggest on how the church can lead in assisting the members to develop their spiritual lives through the use of prayer?

CHAPTER V

"AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM"

(The Spiritual Implications in the Crucifixion Story)

"AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM." These words mark a turning point in history. They describe the deed which is both the darkest chapter in history and the brightest ray of hope. The cross of Calvary is an enigma beyond our power to understand until, and unless, we know the history preceding it. It has been estimated that more than a thousand times in the Old Testament there is a direct reference to Jesus Christ and his life on the earth. The apostle Peter, looking back over the centuries of the Old Testament, tells us, "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." It is said again, "All the prophets spoke of these days." The Old Testament has no real meaning without Jesus Christ, and the life of Christ on earth cannot be understood without the Old Testament. Christ perfectly fulfilled every Old Testament reference to himself. When he said, "It is finished," he meant that he had given perfect proof of his divine origin; that he had filled the cup of suffering for all sinners, and that nothing more was needed or possible to please God.

But God's greatest teachers and preachers had rationalized themselves into false opinions about what the "holy men of old" meant in their sayings. They judged Jesus, not by the true meaning of the prophets, but by their interpretation of the prophets. He did not measure up to these interpretations. They branded him therefore as an imposter. They said that he possessed a demon; "that he was unfit to live on the earth." **"AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."**

The life of Jesus Christ recorded in the four gospels contains an added profound significance. He preached no systematized theology. There is not the slightest trace of a desire in all that he said to formulate what the world now likes to call a system of theology. The apostles, furthermore, after his ascension, made no attempt at systematizing Christian beliefs. Paul gives large emphasis to the tone which runs through all their preaching when he wrote to the Corinthian church, "I determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified." He preached nothing but the greatest life that ever lived and the most noble death that was ever endured.

Books, books, books have been written on "The teachings of Jesus." These books have shown Jesus of Nazareth to have been the greatest teacher that ever lived. But how have so many of us learned so much about his skill in his use of words and failed so much in the proper emphasis upon the greatest skill ever used in how to live. Jesus was first everything he taught others to be. Conniving snivelings tried to "catch him in his teachings," but failed. They also watched him in the temple, the synagogue, on the highways, in the homes of publicans and sinners. But nobody was ever able to point out one deed and say, "Here is something he did that was wrong." He associated with publicans, sinners, and the lowest in the moral realm without sinning with them. "He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." But he did not conform to Jewish traditions. He sharply rebuked the hypocrisy in Jewish life. "AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

But this is not all. Jesus supported his teachings and his great life by unquestioned and unquestionable miracles. Several hundred times, by actual count, Jesus claimed to be a Spirit come forth from God to win the world; save the world; go back to God and judge the world. He supported these claims by numerous miracles covering every impor-

tant area of human experience. As if speaking for all Jews, a great Jewish leader once said, "That a notable miracle indeed has been performed, we cannot deny." The force of Jesus' miracles, however, did not convince the Jews. For there is no doubt so difficult as the doubt which does not want to believe; there is no stupidity so stupid as the stupidity which does not desire to be intelligent; there is no blindness so blind as the blindness that is not willing to see. The Jews said that the power in Jesus' miracles came from a demon in him. So, the inherent power of his miracles was lost on them, the even greater miracle of his own perfect life was wasted on them. He did not meet their self-righteous interpretations of Moses. **"AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."**

There is, moreover, great significance in Paul's outline of the ethical character in Jesus, recorded in Philippians 2:5-11. Existing in the form of God from all eternity, and sharing with God in the creation of all things, he did not consider that this high estate was something he should take for granted. "He emptied himself," which means that he laid it all aside, voluntarily. He came to the earth and lived in human flesh, deliberately subjecting himself to all the experiences common to mortal beings, and in that condescended position he did not even take the role of supervisor of mankind. He humbled himself and took the role of a servant. He declared that the most exalted human being before God is the most humble servant of mankind. In this role of a servant he voluntarily suffered all the punishment due all of mankind for their sins. He had taught that the only riches we keep are the ones we give away; that the only true exaltation is self-effacement; that the only true living is daily dying; that the only way up to God is down through the valleys of humiliation, sorrow, and suffering for others; that the only way we can become giant men is to become like little children; that we cannot live

sinless lives unless we touch and lift the lives of sinners. In the understanding of Jesus, a personal victory over Satan three times in succession was not something to boast about; it was the only self-respecting thing possible. Being transfigured on the highest mountain and being visited by Moses and Elijah from the spirit world, were not things worthy of monuments, as Peter thought they were. But enduring mock trials, being spat upon, pierced with thorns, and dying for a sinful world was worthy of world knowledge. The snows on Mount Herman were never whiter in the winter, than his character was every hour. But the false ways and opinions of God's best men misunderstood him. "AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

Surely there is some way of learning the factors which crucified Jesus, and surely we would want to learn those factors in order that we may escape them ourselves. We may ask, therefore: "What crucified Jesus?"

The first element was religious prejudice. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes, had been trusted for centuries with God's word. They had grown over-confident about their ability to form a superior judgment about the meaning of that law. They had built up a long list of interpretations called "The Traditions of the Elders." These had become standard for testing doctrinal soundness. The mere lack of conformity by others was to them sufficient grounds for condemnation. When Jesus lived on the earth his conscience led him to live by that law which "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." But he was judged by the rabbinical interpretations of that law. These Jewish leaders found no contradiction between Jesus and Moses. His clash was with their misinterpretations of what Moses meant. Rather than be honest and restudy their beliefs they hired men from the street to swear lies on him. "AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."

But have human traditions lost their power today? Has human self-confidence perished? Is religious prejudice no longer an evil in the world? Are not men still partially, or entirely, crucified on crosses of lost confidence, ruined reputation, intolerance and unnecessary alienation? At heart, the evil out of which all these things grow is the sin of insincere and selfish desires. Jesus Christ was free of these because he was wholly spiritual; the only hope for his children is the same spiritual longings in them.

A second factor that crucified Jesus was the treachery of a trusted friend, called Judas Iscariot. Brilliant minds for centuries have tried to explain him, but he stands now as much as he did when Jesus spotted him at the passover table, the incomprehensible enigma. Judas Iscariot had been trusted, and he betrayed that trust. The man of sorrows whom God controlled was betrayed by the man whom Satan ruled. Before the next nightfall, Jesus was to enter death supremely happy; but Judas was to enter death a suicide from his own remorse. He had led the murder-loving mob in the cover of night to the spot where Jesus knelt in prayer and planted the betrayal kiss on his face. The extent of his guilt he recognized only when he felt innocent blood dripping from his own fingers. He repented, but too late for friendship to help the Son of God. The antispiritual lust for carnal money had stifled his meager spiritual love for his Lord. So, he betrayed and helped crucify him.

Does anyone now believe that untrustworthiness in a trusted friend perished with Judas in his tomb? Some men given their chance by older men are still lifted up with pride and ambition until they undermine and replace them. There still are Brutuses who drive the spear in the backs of others. There are Judas Iscariots who, for their own gain, will undermine and connive with the enemies of a friend. Judas has children in all generations. They will live when Christ returns. And why? Because they lack

the spiritual quality which so adorned the life of him whom Judas betrayed.

A third element in the crucifixion of Jesus was the cowardice of the eleven apostles and the indifference in the public mind. The Jews had no power to kill Jesus. Only Pilate could do that. Though pressed hard by the Jews, Pilate tried to avoid killing him. A few dozen recruits, led by eleven faithful apostles, could have made the difference. But fear for their own welfare kept the eleven traveling "afar off." The public was too busy over ceremonial matters to bother with justice or the defense of a righteous man. Pilate, therefore, was left to the pressure of the Jews, and Jesus died. Have these things changed today? Are not young Christians pressed hard to do what is wrong? Does not fear lead many to protect the guilty and allow the innocent to suffer? Does not public apathy drive by the sins on the roadside; allow sin to run rampant by not voting; let the radical element do all the talking? Do not whole congregations and church leaders remain silent at times in order to escape persecution themselves? Good causes and great men are still crucified under the fear in professed friends and under public indifference, because their spiritual stamina lacks the courage to commit them to great things and take the consequences.

A fourth influence which crucified Jesus was the political expediency in Pontius Pilate. Though "he knew for envy the Jews had delivered Jesus into his hands"; and though he said repeatedly, "I find no fault in this man"; the pressure of the Jews on him led Pilate to give the sentence of death on Jesus. In granting this verdict he said, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man." But Pilate was not innocent. He was as guilty as a man could be. Before him stood the one and only person who had never traded principle for policy. But Pilate chose policy instead of principle and sent Jesus to the cross. Policy still often

triumphs over principle. Did you ever hear a man say, "I know he is wrong and unfair to that brother, but I'm saying nothing. I do not want his criticisms on me"? Have you ever known a case where a decision was reached, and later those who reached it said, "We should not have let that happen"? Do you know any cases now where people reach a decision purely on the basis of policy rather than principle? Oh, yes. Great causes and good people still are the victims of policy judgments which crucify principle, but if those involved had the spiritual insights and consciences which Jesus had, the story would be different.

Last of all, and strange though it may seem, pure love crucified Jesus. Before time began God looked ahead and saw that the time would come when the world would need salvation, and he determined to provide it. Boundless Wisdom devised the plan; unlimited Will resolved it; infinite Mercy infused it; infinite Power executed it; infinite Love hallowed it. So it is that we say the world's darkest chapter is our brightest ray of hope. If God or Christ had faltered at the Cross they would have betrayed themselves. But they did not fail. Out of this darkest chapter in human history, there emerged the prayer, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Where else in history did such memorable strength stand up? Did ever such mercy elsewhere speak? Has faith ever stood on higher ground? Has love ever shown itself more refined? The cross of Christ is spirituality at its best.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my Lord;

All the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

I. Sins in the Jews.

- A. Name the sins in the Jews which helped crucify Christ.
- B. Name all you know of Christ which should have convinced them.
- C. Why, in your judgment, were the Jews so set in their beliefs?
- D. Do you think that the large religious differences in the world now could be based largely in the same unyielding devotion to human interpretations of the Scriptures?
- E. Do you assume that any person is entirely free of this weakness?

II. Using Judas and his love for money, build a study calculated to answer the following questions:

- A. What is the Christian attitude toward temporal things?
 1. Does the Christian own them or is he just trusted with them?

2. Can the Christian damn his soul by the way he spends his money?
3. How is the Christian to decide the proper use of money?

B. Is the Christian as much responsible for what he still controls after giving to great causes as he was for how much he gave?

C. Does giving or failing to give have any bearing on Crucifying the Cause of Christ?

III. The Cowardice of friends and the public indifference.

A. Do you believe that the lack of courage in Christians is the cause often of poor church progress?

B. Name some of the ways in which this can happen now.

C. What is the main reason for this weakness?

IV. Policy and Principle.

A. Do you believe that Christians today ever follow policy judgments instead of principle?

B. Is it ever right to reach a policy judgment?

C. Under what conditions should policy decisions never be followed?

V. Discuss the pure spirituality in Christ which led him to die for others:

A. What did "Emptied Himself" include?

1. Can we be duly spiritual without similar sacrifice?

2. Does Romans 12 have any bearing on this thought? Discuss that bearing freely.

- B. Discuss the meaning of:
1. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and give Himself a ransom for many."
 2. "He took on Himself the form of a servant."
- C. What is meant by, "He that would be greatest among you let him be servant of all"?
- D. Can you suggest ways by which Christians can be developed with less desire for prominence and more desire to serve?

CHAPTER VI

PERFECT SPIRITUALITY

The famous counselor of fifty years on family problems, Dr. Angelo Patri, said, "If I were 16 years of age again, I would strive with might and main to build a sturdy character that knew the difference between right and wrong and to be steered by it. I would know the necessity of cultivating my spiritual life and adopt a personal creed to support it. I would search for all that is beautiful in the world of people and in nature and would treasure it reverently. I would try to share what strength I had with any who needed it, and so call myself twice blessed."

The transfer of ethical values from the words we use to qualities of character in ourselves is always the most difficult of tasks. Being able to live the things we know is not easy; and being sure that we know enough is never quite possible. One reason is that it is hard, for some reason, to discipline ourselves, as we want to discipline others. After a thorough study of the quarrels which the enemies of Christ picked with him, one is forced to the sober judgment that these attacks, though brought by the best religious leaders in God's Cause at the time, were produced by dwarfed religious men who believed they were giants in righteousness. The boy who believes he is almost grown up does not take well to talk about his need to grow up; an egotist who believes he already is highly educated disdains all thought of his going away to gain an education. Christ faced a society that was so self-deceived that it was impossible to make himself understood. Once he said plainly to his disciples, "I have many things to say unto you but you are not able to receive them." More bluntly he called the Pharisees "blind guides" who had stopped their own ears of understanding.

It is recognized universally that some distinct quality in Christ set him on a pinnacle of glory above other men. Christ wrote in deeds his own biography of three and a half years. As the incarnation of perfect love and dedication to unselfish service, it stands today the most loved and trusted life of all time. The most impressive thing about Christ is the life he lived. His life guarantees that all he did was genuine and all he said was true. No life lived so well could be false in one respect. Jesus of Nazareth was perfect spirituality.

Living with him and seeing him on test daily, those early disciples caught certain magic qualities which we in the twentieth century miss, because meeting a person in books is not quite the same as meeting him in person. Our next best course is a more devout searching in the gospel records, and in the writings of the apostles, in the hope of a richer insight.

This superior quality in Jesus Christ gave him a charming, captivating power over those early disciples. He told them of their worst faults without losing their admiration. His criticisms were unpolished and definitely sharp; but their unwavering admiration for him and their implicit trust of him softened these corrections into acceptable words.

When the citizens of a certain Samaritan village were inhospitable to Christ, John and Peter wanted to call fire from heaven on them; but the Lord's reply contained no criticism for the Samaritans. He "rebuked them" and said, "You do not know the spirit that you are of." Or again, when two of the apostles got into an argument over which of them would become more prominent in the Lord's kingdom, the other ten, hearing the argument, "Began to become indignant"; then Christ took a little child up and said in substance, "You have to be as far from that kind

of spirit as this child is before you can ever enter my kingdom, not to say grow prominent in it." This humiliating lesson, however, did not alienate them from him. And again, Peter seems to have decided once that he would put an end to this talk about a sacrificial death by Christ, so he pledged himself to see to it that such a thing would never happen. To us, that was admirable and would have been warming loyalty, but Christ connected it with the spirit of hell. "Get thee behind me, Satan," he said, "for you are not on my side, you are on the side of men." Was there some special greatness in Peter that enabled him to absorb this rebuke with grace? Not in the least. That very special something in Christ held Peter and drew him even closer.

Or yet once more, you may recall that it was a very few hours later when Peter boldly affirmed, "I cannot speak for these other apostles but I will die for you," only to be rebuffed with the prophecy that he would deny his Lord three times that very night. Then Christ told him, "When you are converted strengthen your brethren." Peter could have thought: "What is this all about? I am ready to die for him, yet he says I am not even converted." None of this, however, was in Peter's feelings, as far as we can see. Then, a very few hours later, beyond Gethsemane, the mob led by Judas Iscariot came to arrest Christ. Apparently Peter considered this his golden opportunity for proving all he had claimed. He drew his sword and aimed at a young man's head but got only an ear. Likely his next aim would have been more accurate; but he was stopped by his Lord and told to put up his sword. Then he watched Christ pick up the boy's ear, put it in place and heal the wound. Still Peter went along. Why? That extra something above anything Peter had ever known before held him. Those disciples all saw it and admired it; they wanted

so much to be loyal to him but they knew so little of exactly how to be.

This basic something is inestimably and inexpressably important in the lives of us all. We may never have an English word with the captivating magic to comprehend all that this quality contains; but in this discussion we are calling it "Spirituality," controlled and directed by a love for all nations and all men in those nations. His was a world heart; it belonged to no race, creed or country. It belonged to all races, countries, and to each one, equally.

Ministers of the gospel today stand where Christ stood beseeching lost and blind humanity, "Be ye reconciled to God." I hold the firm conviction that my brethren have searched the four Gospels with sufficient diligence to understand and repeat the worded doctrines with reasonable accuracy. We also have developed a loyalty to those doctrines which knows no retreat in the presence of sectarian or modernistic compromises. There is, however, less to be claimed in that basic quality which stood so tall and grand in the Lord Jesus. Have we, in reading the four Gospels, traced mainly the geographic steps of the Lord? Have we learned mainly the verbal accuracy in what he said without drinking deeply of that spiritual fountain in him which was so loyal to God, so useful to mankind, so compassionate to lost mankind, and so noble in basic character?

If the rebukes of Christ had been based on the strategy of how to win, or on other human opinions, they would have alienated his disciples from him; but his spiritual dedications so softened his rebukes and so far outweighed the best qualities in his disciples that they lost their sting. There is not a true gospel preacher in the world who would not trade gladly his most treasured attainment for that quality now.

Those twelve apostles felt the tremendous impact of his life on their own, not as some great authority whose cold commands they must obey, but as a friendship that warmed them through and through. They served him gladly and felt themselves honored for the privilege; but Christ would not let this impact stop at servanthood. He told them, "No longer do I call you servants . . . I regard you as my friends." This friendship became so intimate that we come upon such statements as these: "He appointed the twelve to be with him"; . . . when life became overtaxing, he took the twelve "to a lonely place," where they "could rest." On one occasion he told Peter, "I have been praying for you," and that seems to have been typical of his life toward all the disciples. They saw this friendship extend to others as well. There was no limit to it; for the larger it extended to others, the more they felt it flow to themselves. His healing of the sick and the many other manners of showing this friendship spread so wildly that it was said once, "Everybody is searching for you."

Of course, these twelve men at first followed Christ largely from curiosity and his popularity, for it was so great that multitudes trod one upon another; and typical of many who wanted to be near him, one man "begged him that he might go with him." Christ had so captured these disciples' loyalties within a few months, though, that they went on with him when this popularity changed into disrepute, and the best men in the Old Testament faith were seeking him for murder.

Beyond all the mixed emotions which often moved them to think and act, and beyond all that puzzled them about Christ, they felt that they *belonged* to him. He had captured their loyalties and harnessed their allegiance. They felt honored at being trusted by him, and they wanted to be true to him. They trusted him implicitly and they

loved him ardently. The bewildering authority with which he at first spoke, and the mystic magic which often caused them from curiosity to follow him had changed by the end of three years to a mystic grandeur of commanding goodness, to which they were so devoted with no intentions of forsaking. Others may grow cold and "turn back," but asked of their intentions, these men replied, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Though utterly unable to understand or approach a comprehension of him, they still believed him and loved him.

There were certain other very close friends who also caught much of that goodness as they associated with Christ. The Marys and the Bethany family are among them. We can understand their love for him in no other way.

WE live in an age of intense preaching, with the standards of good preaching rising all the time. Preachers today cannot live as preachers unless they study constantly and keep abreast with the most effective means of getting their lessons over.

All this is good to a point; but it is possible under excess demands of this nature for a preacher to become chiefly an intellectual machine which grinds out thoughts according to the best rules, with little personal feeling. What he says should carry the weight of his soul straight to the souls of others if he is to do his best services in gospel preaching. That weight is carried best when the speaker feels personally responsible for the souls who listen, and he can feel that personal responsibility best when his heart is warm with personal devotions for them. A gospel preacher does himself an injustice as a spiritual shepherd when he allows himself to become so engaged with much speaking that he is not felt as a spiritual power personally in the lives of his hearers. His lessons and he can register

so intensely in the realm of intellectuality and of best techniques that his soul never comes through to the hearer with moving power, because the listener feels himself at such distance psychologically from the speaker. The Gospels reveal much more of that dynamic soul power in Christ than of his attempts at what we today call great preaching. His audience felt that his warm heart belonged to them.

It was a supreme desire of our Lord to furnish and equip his chosen friends with this inner depth, which alone could survive all persecutions. He pictures often for them a life of thorns, privations, being forsaken by loved ones, and even death for their faith; but he also succeeded in leaving them with inward strength which would live beyond these times. The gospel minister today occupies the same position with those who hear him that Christ occupied with his closest disciples. It may be that we as preachers have more responsibility than we have realized when people who have heard us often move to other communities and lose their faith, or religious fervor. Possibly we have tried to feed their souls too much on warnings against doctrinal departures; maybe we have *assumed* that their spiritual needs can thrive on lessons which belong to alien sinners on how to become Christians; we may have pointed our sermons almost entirely toward some religious issue of the day, never asking ourselves if we may be starving the spiritual needs of the church by failing to give them those great assuring lessons about God's loving care, bountiful grace, and hours of intimate communion with him in prayer. And possibly the reason why we fail in these respects is the sad fact that we ourselves have not experienced the deep, satiating drink from this living fountain of strength. It remains still for us to read more carefully the gospels and gain a deeper insight into the Person—tall, strong, dynamic, great and good—who so gloriously captured the lives, loyalties, and love of his close friends. Pos-

sibly a closer look into some specifics will illuminate this thought.

The apostles had grown up in praying homes; they were themselves praying men. Prayer with them was familiar as both a doctrine and an experience. On one occasion, however, after they had heard their Lord pray, they asked with child-like innocence, "Lord, teach us to pray." Evidently they had caught something from his praying which they had never felt, and they wanted that personal experience themselves. Luke reminds us that the Transfiguration scenes began with a "change in the countenance of Jesus," and that this change came over him "as he was praying." Prayer in the life of our Lord consumed whole nights; it spoke from depths which overcame agonies of soul, and it brought angels from heaven to give strength. Prayer was never an experiment with Christ; it was always an experience. With him, the asking and knocking must be accompanied by the seeking. He tried with divine loyalty to convey this great heritage to his apostles. The lines which, in Matthew 6, have been lowered by well-meaning religious groups to the level of mere form and called, inappropriately, "The Lord's prayer," were spoken by him in response to the request on "*How to pray.*" "How" is known to be an adverb of manner. Granting that request, Christ began by saying, "Do not pray as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard because they speak much," and they also "pray to gain the praises of men." That was wrong in both understanding and motive, therefore, unavailing with God. The correct manner, Christ taught, follows these spiritual paths:

1. "Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name." The manner in this line unveils a soul which almost speaks with stammering lips, because its own unworthiness is such that it almost fears it might defame God's name by calling it; but it also is so conscious of his

goodness and love that it moves closer to him and speaks because he is "Our Father." And this manner will run on through all of prayer while this praying life also includes the other elements of right manner.

2. The second line is, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." The first day that the kingdom of Christ existed in fact on earth was the first Pentecost after Christ arose from the dead, but the manner of acceptable prayer which says, "Thy kingdom come," did not, and does not point to Pentecost as a date. Christ was not teaching the apostles to pray for God to remember to hasten Pentecost or to be sure of beginning his kingdom on that day. The manner here intended has exclusive reference to the surrender of lives on the earth to God's will as completely as the spirits in heaven are surrendered. This portion of prayer anticipates the sincerity of heart in the praying person which will be willing to be used wherever and however God may desire in the answer to one's own prayer. The right manner of any prayer involves the willingness to pay the same price for an answer that Christ paid for the answer to his prayers. For, prayer is never an assignment to God or a mere reminder, lest God forget. Prayer includes a yielded and surrendered life, supplicating for more capacity to yield and for strength to do well all that is involved. Prayer knows no retreat from personal duty; it tries first that which it asks God to help it do later. Christ said, "Pray ye after this manner."

3. The third principle in this right manner of prayer is: "Give us this day our daily bread." This is both a petition and an evidence. Several times the Lord had taught that God's Providence is all-sufficient and reliable. Once he pointed to a flock of birds and said that they have no storehouses or barns; but they get along well because "God feeds them." He had said that God's children should not be vexed by the anxieties over tomorrows' needs, because "The

very hairs of your head are all numbered." The never-failing certainty of this providing Goodness in God makes prayer more than experiment; much more than a sort of anxious desire which makes agonizing requests that are accompanied by fear that they may not be granted. It gives to prayer a wisdom greater than wits, a force greater than form, a foresight which can drive out fear. This implicit trust that all things will work together for good in our daily lives is the *manner* of prayer required.

4. The fourth element of manner is: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Much has been said by scholars and others on whether or not this means that the praying person is acknowledging to God that he is willing for God to gauge his mercy in reply by the amount of mercy that has been shown others by the praying person. The two things which require neither scholarship nor great genius to see are, that the great and perfect God does grant mercy to us in our sins *without fail*, and that we are obligated to grant others the same favor from ourselves. The required manner of prayer here is: *That we shall trust and grant with all our being.*

5. The fifth characteristic quality in correct praying is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This manner in our praying recognizes that the gift for meeting life's greatest needs, and for making life's wisest decisions, and for pursuing life's safest courses, and coming nearest succeeding in all undertakings does not lie within man's own wisdom or power; but it does lie within God's power and goodness; and these all-sufficient adequacies stand ready to help us. Prayer as a form or a ritual can never touch this manner of praying; only implicit faith can do so.

These lofty viewpoints, understandings, and attainments in ourselves before, and as, we approach God in prayer,

Christ made no attempt to convey unto the masses. His chosen ministers were specially trained in them, in the hope that they in turn would transfer them by example and experience over into other lives.

The gospel minister today, by the very nature of his life's work and by the extra amount of trust placed in him has in fact a double portion of responsibility for maturing in these qualities, and he should hold himself responsible to do so. Our sermons may fail to gain the expected response at times because they seemed to come more from intellectual sources than from mellowed hearts, which love, and long for all peoples. We may try at times to be effective by good memories more than with sacrificing, dedicated, loving hearts.

We have been thinking about Christ, the power of his life on his apostles and a few other close friends; we now shall look briefly at a further expansion of this power in Christ. His life cast a bright light across the path of his enemies. Shrewd detectives from enemy sects were assigned to catch flaws in him, then arrest him for trial, but they listened until their discouragements sent them home confessing, "Never man so spake." Christ had no special training in logic, or debating, to produce this superior gift. His own spiritual endowments, possessed from the first and strengthened through whole nights in prayer, enabled him to recognize instantaneously the hypocrisy in those men and match the genuineness in himself against it, with withering results on them.

This genuineness in him, so true to God at all times, is what the audience recognized in the sermon on the mount, which led them to go away saying, "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." This authority was not quoted from books; it was felt from the weight with which his great life endowed what he said.

This same greatness in Christ, which so mastered his friends and so bewildered his enemies, was the power which drew foreigners, sinners, and outcasts to him.

A woman who had never met him pressed through a jammed crowd on a highway telling herself all the way, "If I can but touch his garment I shall be healed," and her disease of twelve years was healed by this touch of faith.

A Roman officer, on being acquainted with Christ's reputation, developed the confidence that he had the power, willingness and goodness to heal the officer's servant; and he was correct.

Blind men by the roadside had heard about him so much that when he was passing them the multitude was unable to silence them, for they were crying aloud, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on US"; and he did.

A tax collector, distrusted by almost every other Jew for his supposed dishonesty, welcomed the perfect Son of God into his home and felt at ease with him. He was led voluntarily to raise the subject of his supposed dishonesty and offer to correct every past mistake with multiplied amount if anyone would call his attention to those mistakes.

A woman who once was a sinner, possessed by seven demons, and was labeled "a sinner," remained with him until he cast those demons out of her, then she continued with him unembarrassed. She is the Mary to whom he appeared after his resurrection.

Lepers believed the reports when they heard of his greatness. They, too, called from their isolation post far from the road, "Lord have mercy on US," and he did.

Mothers so much trusted the reports which they heard of him that they brought their little children to him for his hands to rest on them.

This unmatched spiritual power carried over into the apostolic period, after the apostles no longer had Christ with them in person. The Corinthian church (split four ways over the personalities of men, bogged down in a case of sordid adultery beneath respect among Gentile people, wrangling in the courts because they refused Christianity its rightful influence in their differences; mixed up on and abusing marriage laws, some of them accusing Paul of hypocrisy in claiming he was an apostle, still observing some of their former heathen rites, desecrating the Lord's supper to the level of a gluttonous and drunken human feast, jealous over spiritual gifts, barren of love, abusing the rights of women in the church, some of them denying the resurrection of the dead; all of them lacking in relief work outside their own group) received one day a letter written by Paul, the man whose preaching a few years before had converted them; and this letter corrected all their sins. Be it remembered, however, that Paul told them: their conversion did not result from his eloquence, or from wisdom in men; for he "determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The giant greatness in Christ and his sacrificial death for the world is what brought them low, ashamed of their sins; but Paul's clinching argument with them is in chapter 2, verses 11-16. There he draws their attention to their use of worldly standards in reaching their decisions. He says men cannot understand God by that standard; for the will of God "is *spiritually* discerned."

Paul's doctrine of Grace versus works in the book of Romans is based entirely on the concept of Christianity as a spiritual thing. When he said that "mercy rejoices over judgment" he was thinking of what spirituality will do in men who live according to God's will. His outline of Christ's mind in Philippians 2 is a description of the road a mind always travels when it is spiritual. Christ emptied himself

of all glory and power in heaven in order to help helpless mankind; he took man's nature, became man's servant, then died in man's stead, because he loved man so much he did not want him to suffer for his own sins. That was the acme of spiritual manifestations. Paul's outline of great thinking in Philippians 4 is the blueprint for pure spirituality. Its standards are Truth, Honor, Justice, Purity, Beauty, and topics of uplifting quality as opposed to idle gossip. He says:

“Whatsoever things are true;
Whatsoever things are honest (or honorable),
Whatsoever things are pure,
Whatsoever things are lovely;
Whatsoever things are of good report;
If there be any virtue,
If there be any praise,
THINK ON THESE THINGS.”

When we recall that God said through the old prophet that, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,” it becomes unmistakably clear that these spell out the secret of soul power in gospel ministers. He who would live within those spheres of experience which set our Lord on such exalted pinnacles of glory while at the same time living among the most lowly of mankind, must discipline his own mind constantly. For great spiritual attainments, approaching the full measure of the stature in Christ, so earnestly prayed for by Paul in Ephesians 4, comes as a child of one's own thinking. We build the spiritual houses in which we live as really as we build houses of clay.

Years have a way of their own in telling how serious these lessons are. We learned in college English the *fact* that:

“Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returnest
Was not spoken of the soul."

But the sins, sorrows, sufferings, and (be it hoped) some measure of spiritual growth through a long span of years, write these same facts upon us with deeper meaning. So, if I were asked to write one short rule for gospel ministers to memorize and follow, it would be: "Know and discipline thou thyself."

As intended in the parlance of today, what is the difference between a statesman and a typical politician? It is this:

A politician is a person who sits in a statesman's chair, but whose personal and political interests dominate him more than his duty to public welfare does. Whereas, a statesman is one who occupies a political position in life, but whose personal and political fortunes always are subjected by him to the position of unimportance in his service to the interests of the public.

This same difference can exist between a preacher of Christian truth and a spiritual gospel preacher. We may word that difference this way:

A preacher is a man who stands in a pulpit and preaches the truth, conscious of his own future fortunes on earth, including the facets of popularity, ambition, prominence, and financial support, which feed those fortunes.

But a spiritual gospel preacher is a man who utters the same truths, but with a broken heart for his own sins, with living compassion for others who also are sinners, with the urgency of one rescuing people from a fire, and with the love of Christ, who died to save all of us. *Are we sure, always, that we know ourselves?*

Let there be one more brief reflection settle in our understandings about the Christ. Thomas Dekker, the Eng-

lish dramatist of the seventeenth century, sentimentally said of Christ:

“A soft, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,

The first true gentleman that ever breathed”; and these qualities, Christ possessed in the largest measure; but they do not exhaust an understanding of his spiritual qualities. His righteous indignations flashed with deep emotional evidence, as evidently as his tender compassions extended to Mary and Martha at the tomb of Lazarus. He told the Pharisees, who esteemed themselves as specialists in God’s truth, that they knew about as much about gems of divine truth as a bunch of hungry hogs knew about priceless pearls; that they were always straining out wrongs the size of gnats, then joyfully gulping down wrongs the size of camels. He drew a word-picture of these men’s spiritual stature in the hyperbole of a man forgiven of \$12,000,000 then refusing to forgive a debt of seventeen dollars owed to him. The glaring sham in these men was depicted by pointing to a fig tree which was covered in green foliage but had not one fig on it for food. He was not being the traditional “soft, meek, patient personality,” when he said to these men, “You are like graves that are full of decaying bodies, the outside of which is painted white to draw the minds of people away from the corruptions inside. “Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows’ houses, and for pretense make long and loud prayers; therefore you shall reap the greater damnation.” Pure spirituality is as vicious on sin as it is kind toward the sinner. The beloved John, in one phase of his spirituality, could say, “Little children, let us love one another”; but as a “son of thunder,” he could say of those who denied the virgin birth of Christ, “They are liars.” The length, breadth, height and depth of spirituality comprehends all that has any right to claim place in

the Christian; it is all-possessing; all-directing; and all-inspiring.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. List the elements you would suggest for carrying out well Dr. Patri's "personal creed."
- II. As you read the Gospel records, the impression grows that Christ was distinct, unique, captivating without trying to be. Recall some of the sharp, pointed rebukes he gave his disciples:
 1. Did these rebukes seem to alienate him from those disciples?
 2. Do you know any person today who could talk that plainly to his close friends without alienating them from him?
 3. What extra did Christ have that held those disciples?
 4. Are the public criticisms today offered apparently out of a satisfaction for being able to offer the example of Christ in the sharpness of the method more than from a spiritual desire to help those criticized?
 5. Response to sharp criticisms today do not get the same results that Christ got to his. Is that difference due to less spirituality in critics today than Christ had when he criticized?
- III. Suggest some ways and means which you would recommend for developing more spirituality in church members today.
- IV. List some disadvantages confronting the preacher today in developing in himself the spiritual dynamic seen in Jesus Christ.
- V. What is meant by:
 1. Dedication?
 2. Spiritual dedication?

CHAPTER VII

AM I SPIRITUAL?

If the reader has followed page by page carefully through this book to the present, there has settled in the mind the very serious question, "Am I myself spiritual?" This searching question and its results in the life asking it will mature consequences which are limited to each person's ability to undergo the very serious task of honest self-examination. And the fact that it is a hard question to answer sincerely in one's own life is not the most serious part of the problem. The even more serious part is whether or not each individual is willing to undertake the task seriously. Those who content themselves with the mere mental assent that self-examination is important will not come out close to the point at which those arrive who honestly go into the difficult task of self-evaluation. The willingness, therefore, to undertake the job, or the unwillingness, will be, in the outset, a good indication of whether or not each person has any appreciable measure of spirituality with which to begin.

It should be understood, then, that the first question of prime importance in this quest directly concerns the willingness to undergo this self-testing before trying to test others. One reason why Jesus of Nazareth called the Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites was that they spent most of their time working on others and little working on themselves. His parable about people who try to dig the specks out of other people's eyes while they themselves have a log in their own eyes is a case in point. The pretension of wanting mankind to look with clear vision was an affirmation that they were interested in clear seeing; but their unwillingness to clear their own vision before trying to clear other people's showed that, after all, their interest was not

an unselfish desire for people to get well; instead, it was an interest in digging in other people's eyes in the name of good eyesight. And looking for specks in other people's eyes while being hindered by a log in the searcher's own eye was a very senseless thing. When this lesson was transferred to the ethical realm of human examination for spiritual values, it uncovered a very hypocritical set of religious leaders, because those men were always claiming to run down religious culprits in the name of loyalty to God, while themselves harbored worse things in their own lives than those were which they condemned in others. This is the most crucial point of sincerity known. For, when people indulge themselves in an examination of others always, they show that their interest is more in satisfying their vanity by convincing themselves that they are superior than in the improvement of human character. In so doing, they portray the very vicious type of hypocrisy which is willing to degrade themselves before God in order to glorify themselves in their own eyes and the eyes of others. This fact brings us back to the previously expressed fact that the first prime factor rests squarely on the question of whether or not each one is perfectly willing to undergo a sincere, thorough self-examination.

Quite some years ago, when I was in a revival meeting in a very large Texas city, the minister of the congregation talked at length with me about some severe criticisms of him on the part of some members in both his own congregation and others in the city. Those criticisms dealt with his character. He strongly denied the charges. I accepted his explanations and sympathized deeply; the matter passed there. Years later I read a confession from him that those charges were true and he asked forgiveness on the part of all concerned. I thanked God for his sincere penitence and forgave him in my heart. Still later he and I appeared together on the same college lectureship and

he took me aside briefly to say, "When I told you I was innocent of those charges, I lied, and I want you to forgive me for the lie." He was assured that the difficulty in admitting such a thing was understandable, that I forgave him the moment I read his confession of guilt, and that he could rely firmly on my desires to help him. Then he told me: (calling the name of a very prominent minister) that this minister suggested to him that he champion some religious issue and make a strong attack on somebody involved in that issue. Said the advisor, "People like a champion, they will flock to you immediately and will forget your former sin." But the man then said to his eternal credit, "My guilt in the first sin has given me too much remorse for me to be willing to seek Christian friendship through any channel other than pure mercy from God and forgiving Christians." This resolution is spirituality somewhere toward its top level. But the lack of it in his advisor is deplorable. In the belief now that the first requisite in growing spiritual is a sincere willingness to undergo an honest self-examination, it might be asked: "Are there not some reliable standards on which we can depend to judge ourselves, and are there not some reliable tools which we can use in building for ourselves worthy spiritual homes within our own hearts?"

I. Spirituality requires that Christians have the constant desire to promote others. "Let none of you seek his own desires, but each of you the desires of others"; let each of you prefer the other before himself (Phil. 2:1-4). This is Bible, but the world we now know is hardly that kind of world, and much of the world's standards have settled in Christian minds as basic for them to use. Two Christians may know of an opportunity for profitable investment and have the needed capital to invest; each also may know the other is vitally interested in the investment, but neither specially needs to invest; but they may each

rush to get ahead of the order in order to make high profits, knowing that the other will miss those profits. Again, two men may know of a good job somewhere, neither specially needs a promotion, or both may need promotion. But these two men may desire that job strongly and diligently seek it. Each may wish there were two jobs so that both could get one; but since there is only one, each tries to get it and leave the other stranded. Or, two men may be working side by side and it becomes fairly evident that one will be promoted, it is only a question of which one will get it; both of them may go about trying to get it, and everyone would say, "Well, he had a right to get it if he could." But Christian ideals require something like this: One of them go to the boss and say, "Mr. Jones, I would like very much to have that promotion, but John has a larger family than I have; he has had large medical expenses; I request sincerely that, if you can see your way to do so, you promote him to the new job. Don't worry about me, my day will come later." Somewhere along this pattern the voice of spirituality always speaks. Feet that are shod with unselfish shoes always walk along this road.

2. Spirituality always takes the attitude which will not cover anything in Self that it would not cover in others; it will not publish on others what it would not publish on Self; it will desire, seek, promote and pray for the total life-contentment in others as well as for Self. The beloved John shows this when he wrote to the well-beloved Gaius, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (III John 2). This is much more than being willing for, and happy with, the prosperity of others after we have accumulated much for ourselves. It wants others to experience these good things even when, and while, we have little or none of them for ourselves. No other person ever so much desired or promoted the well-being of others as much as Christ did,

and he did it while "The Son of Man had not where to lay his head." This all means, naturally, that the spiritual heart is quite large in its capacity and its endowments.

3. The person who is deeply spiritual is unselfish with his salvation. It might surprise us how many are more selfish than we know in this way. For example: A man may be working with many young ladies and young men who are not Christians and seldom make much effort to save them until he falls in love with one or one of the men falls in love with his sister. Then, because these are soon to be members of his own family, he begins trying to convert them. It is commendable that he finally got around to this effort, but a pure spiritual desire would have tried long ago for their own sakes, and not have waited until their salvation became a thing of personal interest to him in his own happiness. Or again: A man may never be much interested in attending Sunday Bible study until his own children are old enough to attend, then he begins and takes them. It is wonderful that he waked up through an interest in his children, but why has he never been interested in the many children who have not been attending, and why still is he not actively interested in those other children? Is the man's interest really not a selfish interest? Is he trying to save souls because they belong to God by right, or is he trying to save *certain* souls because they are precious to him? Is this interest selfish or spiritual? Yet once more: Watch the best of church people at times; they work until all their own families are saved then often they relax; they go along seeing that their sons have active parts in public church work because that part serves their spiritual needs, but many others as worthy are not used so often, maybe. Why this difference? It is great for church leaders to know the value of activity in Christian work and to see that it is given; but these discriminations, though maybe not as conscious as they may

seem, are indications of a scarcity in pure spiritual structure in soul. And finally: Here is our own race and yonder are other races; here is our own nation and yonder are other nations. "All the world" and "every creature" are the terms of the Great Commission, but do we have in use always reliable standards by which to decide that our decisions show an equal interest in saving them? Do we ever settle down to a prayerful effort toward coming up with a decision, after prolonged prayers, that we will give a certain amount to "foreign missions" and a certain amount each year to "home missions" because "We want to be equally interested in saving other nations with the interest we have in our own nation"? Or, again, how do we decide whether or not we are interested in the development of other races equally with the development of our own race? Whether the interest centers primarily in our own families, or our own communities, or our own race, or our own nation, the spiritual heart will seek always to be equal in its interests and its efforts.

4. Spirituality and worldliness are opposites in the life. They begin with opposite motives, they operate on opposite bases, and they wind up with opposite results. Neither is an act within itself; both produce acts but the qualities of worldliness and spirituality are attitudes and motives, not the acts themselves. Like the disease in our health, these qualities in character must be dealt with more than the acts. A good family doctor takes the temperature of his patient, checks all the other symptoms he can find, then he goes about deciding what causes these symptoms and pronounces the disease, then prescribes the remedy. In exactly the same way, worldliness and spirituality work in a life. People with worldly motives may do almost exactly the same things that a pure spiritual mind may do but be lost for being worldly in motives.

For example: Two young men enter the same college on the same day; they make similar grades for four years and graduate with high honors. Then they enter the same medical school, finish there with the same honors; they intern at the same hospital; they set up practice in the same city; they become equally famous and attend very much the same church assemblies, because they are members of the same congregation; they both have honorable reputations and are praised by their fellow-townsmen; they both die, but they go to two destinies. WHY? One man from the beginning set his mind on attaining great renown and making a large reserve capital, building himself a \$100,000 mansion and retiring early with good income to "take it easy the rest of the way." The other man all the way planned how much good he was going to do with his money, how many lonely souls he would cherish, how many he would teach the way of salvation, how many homes he would help others build for themselves, and he planned for himself and family only a \$30,000 house to live in, but used the difference for others. He cared little for his own popularity, he was humble, gentle, kind, patient, and his greatest happiness was the belief that he and his skills were relieving others and honoring God. The first man had a worldly mind, the other had a spiritual mind.

Examples of these two lives are found in the New Testament. "Two men," said Jesus, "went up into the temple to pray," and you remember the results. They both prayed but one was condemned and the other blessed. And, again: It was in the temple and many were coming along giving into the temple treasury. Those who gave many dollars were rebuked and the lady who gave two pennies was praised. Or again: A certain rich man, "clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day" entertained his friends daily, while there sat at his gate a helpless beggar who never received a penny from his wealth. They

went to opposite destinies, because they held two opposite attitudes toward the things they each experienced under God.

Here are two gospel ministers. They both are powerful, effective and have large mental attainments. Both are interested in other people and work diligently with them. But one's interest is helping them, or teaching them, or inviting other ministers to their own congregations for work—all of it is selfish, for he desires the help of that man, or to walk in the glory of that man, for the ultimate good which will return to him. But the other minister's interest never runs along that line. His sole desire is to help people, comfort them, encourage them, save them. Where he works is decided largely by the good he can do or not do; his income is important but not the most important thing. One of these men is worldly while preaching and trying to save others; the other is spiritual in motive and in life.

Most, if not all, who read this already have become acquainted with the work of Dr. Switzer in Africa. He has four earned doctorate degrees. He could have just about named his university and his salary if he had wanted to teach in the United States, but deliberately chose something else. He is now in his eighties, has been in Africa more than forty years. He took his medical skill and went to Africa, established a hospital where he could treat African lepers. He spent all his energies, all his training, all his money and all he could earn doing just that. When his patients were receptive he also taught them his understanding of the gospel of Christ. Some years ago he won the Nobel Prize but he did not put the money away for his old age; he used it to enlarge his hospital for the treatment of more lepers.

Dr. Switzer had many discouragements in his work. No doubt, many of his friends told him he should use his great skills "at home." Especially in his declining years, it likely is true that many have tried to prevail on him to come home and rest, but he still is there. The story is told that once when he was building a new unit to his hospital he was carrying timbers from the brush up the hill where it could be carted to the building place. One of the strong natives stood watching. He asked the man to help him carry the timbers, but was rebuffed with the reply: "I am a man of letters, I do not stoop to that kind of work." "A man of letters," because he was attending college, not knowing the superiority of the man to whom he spoke. "I do not stoop" to that kind of work, not realizing that rendering that kind of service was exaltation, not stooping.

The more serious point for us now, however, is this: Dr. Switzer has given up so very much for a service which God requires of somebody. As a Lutheran, he believes God holds him responsible to accept a life-long responsibility in doing that kind of work. Everyone who knows his Bible knows that healing the sick and trying to save the lost are works which God requires of his very own people. People who claim to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" have just as much responsibility to do this kind of work in Africa as anybody has to do it in America. Just how many "top flight" men in the Lord's church are there who can read the Great Commission, then read what Dr. Switzer has done and sit down and tell himself sincerely, "I do not believe it is any of my duty to go and do that kind of service"? Everyone will say that somebody should go; we will praise those who do go; but we shield ourselves from the act of assuming the responsibilities which Dr. Switzer took on himself. Of course, we can find a number of reasons which seem good to us "why it is not best for me to go," but the duty still remains undis-

charged. Under these circumstances, can we claim that we have the spirituality in our lives which Christ had when he gave up so much to bring us salvation?

Or, something which is very close to this is helping those who do go to get help, financially and otherwise, in the sacrifices which they make. Several men who have traveled among the churches to "raise the support" which they will need for their work in foreign lands have told me of some very disappointing experiences which they met in some places. We can thank God that there is a growing readiness on the part of churches to meet those needs and the number of churches willing to help is increasing. The same can be said of the number of preachers who respond to encourage help; but there are yet too many places and preaching brethren who are lukewarm on the subject of adequate help for our missionaries. Most of us here in the States have many times more conveniences and comforts than they have and our support financially is from two-fifths more to double theirs; but we never urge that they be given more. Injustice many times is endured by them because they do not want to complain. Our spirituality here at home is severely tested by these injustices. How near are we to the African who said he would not help? He laid not a hand on the load; we lay a half of a hand or two-thirds. How spiritual are we?

If our entreaties to others always are "in the spirit of Christ," as Paul's were; if we are among those strong ones who always "bear the infirmities of the weak"; if we do not try to "please ourselves because Christ pleased not himself"; if we can practice well the doctrine of daily looking into God's mirror and seeing the spirit of Christ then changing our own character into the likeness of his; if we practice the doctrine of abasing and humbling Self, leaving all the exalting to God; if we can avoid all haughtiness, can associate with the lowly, never be conceited; if we can

weaken ourselves through sharing sympathy with others; if we can live without anxiety, believing that through our prayers God will give us peace which goes beyond our powers to understand; if we demonstrate in our own lives the required love for God and our fellowmen; if this love can approximate the love for others which would be willing to become the outcast one for others in order that they might be saved; if we can look into the eyes of those who betray us and talk with them without bitterness; if we can pray to escape the smaller cup of agony, as Christ did in Gethsemane, in order to go on and endure the larger cross of death on a cross just that we may render the larger service to mankind, including our enemies; if we can do all this without feeling any self-pity; if we can drive the "covered wagon" efforts across hot, dry deserts and plains and expend our last energies that way to help strangers become acquainted with the will of God; if we can suffer isolation on some lonely island with outlaws, as John did, but remain so much in the right spirit that God will enable us to feel the rapturous joys of heavenly scenes—If we can do all this and be all this the records in heaven will credit us with spirituality.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. The first requisite for self-improvement.
 1. What is this requisite?
 2. Why is it often so difficult to get people to improve?
 3. What designation did Christ place on the Pharisees for their perverseness?
- II. Testing our own desires to become more spiritual.
 1. Discuss the desire to promote others as a test of our own spirituality.
 - (1) What do you think about the illustration where

one man asked that the better job be given to the other man?

- (2) Would that course be an indication of more Christian spirit?
 - (3) Is that course often taken by people that you know?
 - (4) If a person today should take that course would he be considered a good business man?
 - (5) Is the course any test at all of one's spirituality?
2. In what way is spirituality tested by not covering guilt in ourselves?
 3. Show how people can be selfish with their Christianity.
 - (1) Show how it can work in our own families.
 - (2) Show how it can work in our own race.
 4. Discuss spirituality and worldliness as opposites in the life.
 - (1) Illustrate how it can work in gaining an education; in following professions; in preaching the gospel.
 5. Show how our spirituality is tested in our efforts, or lack of effort, to get the gospel into all the world.

CHAPTER VIII

PATIENTLY ENDURING SUFFERING

Unto the last one of us has come the realization already, no matter our age or experience, that the problem of suffering is not imaginary, but a stern reality. The sources of this understanding are our jobs, our homes, our business, health, character, reputation, and death; and the problem is universal. It is no respecter of persons; the individual and the group, the good and the bad alike are in the constant effort to solve the problems of goodness, of happiness and survival. Nor is the fact or the nature of our problems new. Those which we experience have existed in principle through all time. Both secular and sacred histories are replete with examples. From childhood to the grave we go into the constant struggle to face bravely and solve well the problems that we meet.

The understanding of human suffering is a philosophy. It lies at the roots of all that is unselfish and good. Its lessons of triumph feed the roots of patience and faith more than any other experience. If God had not permitted men to suffer the extreme of endurance, the world would never have known for sure that God always will lift the faltering soul when it has gone the limit of its own endurance. Human suffering, therefore, has become the laboratory of character, in which the survival of the worthwhile is discovered. And why should not this process be accepted well? In other realms it is accepted. We today use the laws of mathematics, chemistry and physics without question, but upon reflection we know that they have come to us only through years of testing. By the method of trial and error they lost their deficiencies and come to us in their present dependable forms.

If the laws of science need refining before receiving the full confidence of men, why should not the souls of men, intended in the image of God, but afflicted by the foibles of men, be expected to endure such tests?

There are two Old Testament examples to which attention is now called. The first one is the life of Asaph, in Psalm 73. Asaph was the song director at the court of David, the king. His great talents gave birth to the musical tradition and school of thought which lived beyond the Babylonian captivity, 500 years later. But, in the course of his life, he experienced an extreme adversity which almost split his soul. He said, "My feet well nigh slipped—my steps were almost gone." That good man, whose life had blessed unnumbered thousands, found himself dazed and all but skeptical about the justice of God. He entered a series of comparisons. He saw the wicked without restraint, free from the burdens of life; then saw himself ground down under the press of reverse; he was burdened, they were free; he was destitute, they had plenty; he had been faithful to God, and they had boasted of their freedom from God. It was this experience that came near ruining the faith of Asaph. But one day, he waked up. It was when—"I went to the sanctuary of the Lord and I saw their latter end." Asaph made two worthwhile discoveries which he could not have found without hard times. In the first place, he discovered himself—that he was a foolish, selfish man. "I saw the prosperity of the wicked," he said, "and I was envious." In the second place, he discovered God—God in worship, and God in judgment. As one who had the privilege of communion with God on the earth and eternal life with him in the world to come, he saw that he was the fortunate man and that the wicked man was unfortunate. In the life of Asaph and his experiences, there is a perfect mirror of how you and I sometimes see life in the reverse today.

The second Old Testament example is Job. According to the book by his name, God and Satan met up at church one day and had a conversation. God said, "Do you know my servant, Job?" Satan answered, "Yes, I know Job; but Job does not serve you for nothing; he serves you for what he can get out of it. You have me hedged off from him. Just let me to him, and I will make him deny you." God gave Satan permission to afflict Job as he pleased, except in body. Satan killed all the family of Job except his wife, and sent aliens from afar to steal his cattle and sheep. Job stood the test. Then God and Satan had another conversation in which Satan said, "There are people who will be faithful under the loss of property, but there is nobody who will be faithful under the loss of health." God gave him permission to afflict the body of Job, which he did with boils from the crown of Job's head to his feet. After many days of suffering, some of Job's friends came to see him. They sat and looked on for a while, and then jumped to an unjust conclusion. From childhood they had been taught the false philosophy that all human suffering is sent from God because the person has sinned. So, his three friends made a round of several speeches each, condemning Job, and calling upon him to repent. In addition, Job's wife said, "You are a fool if you keep your faith—curse God and die." Through the days of harrowing torture in body and heart, Job at times wavered and staggered in both his understanding and his faith. Once, he charged that God was not fair, and that he had made an example out of him. But, we can hardly blame Job, because God had told Satan he was the best man on earth and that he was upright in his heart. But on the whole, he retained his equilibrium enough that God immortalized his example as one of patient endurance. His divine philosophy of suffering we shall mention later, but here let it be said that Job made four discoveries through his suffering. First of all, he

discovered his real wife; that she was not the woman he had thought her to be; however religious she had appeared to be, she was only appearance, for under test she grew bitter and called upon her husband to curse. It must have been a painful experience with Job when his suffering unveiled her. His second discovery was his real friends—at least who they were not. Job was the most influential leader in his community. His three friends gathered about him always ready with praise of him, but when some baffling experience came into his life, they took the course which proved that they had never been really Job's understanding friends. They had become associated with him because of his religious popularity, so they turned upon him and accused him. Job's third discovery was the finding of himself. No man knows himself in a given place until he has that experience. Job had been a very wealthy man, prosperity had rolled into his hands through many years. He could not possibly know himself in poverty and the loss of health until that experience came. Experience is a book that is never printed; its pages are turned by the individual life, and the manner in which he writes himself page after page in that book is the test of the real man himself.

Job's fourth discovery was God. At first, he complained to God, then he challenged God to meet him in conference and discuss the reasons for his misery; but as he waded deeper and deeper into his experiences, he came to the understanding that his own wisdom consisted in being resigned. So he said, "I came into the world naked, and naked I shall go hence. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away—blessed be the name of the Lord."

But, we have not yet seriously tried to answer our question, "Is it fair for God to permit righteous people to suffer?" Only groundwork for that study has been laid. First of all, let us keep in mind that suffering is everywhere—

whether there is a God or not; and if there is a God who is able to influence human experience that way, he is wiser and greater than we are. He is entitled to our respect whether we understand him fully or not. And then, if we should say there is no God, we still have not solved our problem of human suffering or death. Let us now go one step farther and ask, "Is it righteous for the wicked to suffer?" The answer to this question is simple. We universally recognize that it is just for wicked people to reap the reward of their wicked deeds. And now let us directly study our main question: "Is it righteous for good people to suffer?" We must keep in mind that no one of us is perfect, therefore, on the same basis that it is just for the wicked to suffer, it is just for the righteous to suffer in keeping with their mistakes.

But there are reasons aside from, and higher than, the laws of retribution, why righteous people must suffer. The first reason I would assign is to inspire faith and courage in others. Of all the inspiring things you have ever read in the Bible, what would you say was the most inspiring? Has it not been the great heroes who were not afraid of blood or fire? Have not our inspirations been the Cross of Calvary and the martyrs who later reproduced the faith and courage of their Lord? Yes, these have been mighty factors in our lives of faith, and yet they are outstanding in the realm of human suffering.

The second motive of human suffering is substitution. Our soldiers at war are heroes to us because they have substituted their suffering to protect our freedom. The difference between Jesus of Nazareth and the thieves between whom he died is that they were suffering for the guilt of their sins, and he was innocently suffering for their good. The entire system of Christian sacrifice, of time and money, is built upon the ideal of placing ourselves into

the need of other people and voluntarily suffering for those needs.

The last motive of suffering is refinement. The patriarch Job was the greatest man on earth. God said that he was. According to all that was then known of justice and mercy, he did not deserve his experiences. And certainly, in comparison with other men, he should have been on the other far extreme—at ease, while they suffered what he did. But, in the wisdom of God, even Job himself was not too good to experience what came to him. It should be remembered that in the reasoning of both Job and his friends it was often said, “According as I have seen” and “Ask of them that have lived before thee.” This can but mean that their standards of right and wrong were colored by the selfishness and carnal conclusions of men. But in his answer to their reasonings, God said, “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together and the songs of God shouted for joy? . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depths? Have the gates of death opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? . . . Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or has thou seen the treasures of the hail? . . . Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? . . . Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? . . . He that reproveth God, let him answer it.” Then Job answered the Lord, and said, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: Yet, twice; but I will proceed no further.”

What does all this mean? It means simply that, though Job was the best man on earth, he still was a human being, and subject to all the weakness of men; and in comparison

with God, he was wholly unworthy. Until Job heard the voice of God, he was judging his merits by the standards of men; but when God challenged him by the standards of wisdom, justice and truth as found in the merits of God, a pall of silence and shame fell upon his heart. In his complete resignation, he said, "When he hath refined me, I shall come forth as gold." Refined of personal esteem and self-confidence, he was a fit vessel for more wealth than he once had. So, God healed his wounds, restored his health. "And the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. . ."

New Testament teaching puts suffering in the same light. At the end of a long arduous life, the apostle Paul, having gone through prisons and perils many, having been beaten many times without fault, said, "I have learned in whatever state I am therein to be content." Yes, Paul learned his lesson through hard experience. The twelfth chapter of Hebrews and verse eleven reminds us that no chastening at first seems joyous but grievous, but that it afterward yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby. The strongest and best souls we have known have been those lives which had been refined and seasoned by hard times.

Let us, therefore, as early as we may, come to the understanding that he who has traveled well the road of adversity has passed through an open door, beyond which, under God, he may have the best that life can offer and the sweetest that fellowship with God can give.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. Discuss human suffering as a laboratory for discovering character.
- II. Asaph as an example:

1. Who was Asaph?
2. What was his position in life?
3. What ordeals did he experience?
4. What temporary effect did this experience have on his religious life?
5. What discovery of weakness in himself did Asaph make?
6. Did the finding of himself indicate a more spiritual nature?

III. Job as an example:

1. Discuss Job and his reputation in the beginning of the story.
2. Discuss Job's family and wealth.
3. Name his three friends who first spoke.
4. Under what false religious belief did they labor?
5. When they faced their dilemma of trying to figure out why Job was suffering so much would a more spiritual nature have led them into a different course with Job? Might they have restudied their philosophy of human suffering before persecuting Job so hard?
6. How did Job show some lack of spirituality?
7. Discuss Job's life at the close in terms of a more spiritual nature.
8. Name four important discoveries which Job made for himself, and which can help us now to improve our spirituality.
9. Show how the enduring of suffering patiently will increase and improve spirituality always.