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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Give me a shove off, please.[1]

'I am resolved what I will do.'—Lk 16[4].

You know when you are cycling and are tired a bit, and the road goes climbing, climbing, uphill all the time, how, when you get to the top at last, you give one more shove and with that you are off and rattling down quite easily at a great pace, no longer fagged one bit. Well, every now and then in other things too we get to the crest of a brae, and make a new start just like that. There comes a birthday, or a new term opens; we shift to another school, or get a master that we like, a really decent sort; or perhaps it is New Year, and with that we make a new beginning, and resolve that we are going to do this, and this, and this. Now, if a time like that has come to you, what is it that you have made up your mind to do? 'What's that? Get Dad to give you a motor bike instead of your old push one!' Well, that's an idea certainly! 'Plague Mother till she lets you sit up half an hour longer. And, indeed, she promised that she would, when you got a big girl. And everybody now is saying how big you have grown, so that it must be time.' Yes, there's something in that. Only you are telling me what you have made up your mind that Dad and Mother are to do, but what about you, what are you going to do? 'What do you mean?' you say. 'What kind of things?' Well, I'll tell you. I have a great big desk at home, one of the kind that has a lid that pulls down and covers everything. Never you get a desk like that. And if any one offers you one, say politely, 'It is very kind, but long, long ago I promised my minister I would never use one. He said it wouldn't be good for one.' And indeed it hasn't been good for me. It makes one so untidy. You pile in things till they lie there in heaps, and then you just pull down the cover and don't see it. And now and again you open it a little bit, and throw in more papers, and more papers, till the mess is awful. Many a time I have looked at my desk and said, 'I must tidy that up some day'; and now and then I got as far as this that, if to-morrow wasn't very busy, I might do it then. But something else always turned up, and that desk got worse and worse. But it's done now. It's beautiful. There isn't a desk in Scotland like it. Every now and then I go and have a look at it. I have ranged up the family and said to them, 'Now that's how a desk ought to be kept, and when you have an office, see that all your clerks keep theirs like that.' And they said, 'Very good, Dad, we'll see to that.' Which isn't the way they always speak, but the desk has awed them too. 'I know,' you say, 'it's doing the things we always mean to do, yet never start.' That's it. 'Like getting up in the morning!' Exactly. We always do mean to get up when we're called, don't we? It's really no fun lying on. One has to hurry so, and bolt one's breakfast; and there are rows; and when one is late, why do things always go and get themselves lost somehow? I don't know, but they do. You laid your cap just here, and now when you're in a fidget to be off, it's gone. It's like that game that Mother plays—Spring-cleaning—when everything is hidden cunningly in a new place, and any one who can find anything at all the first week gets a prize, but no one ever does. Yes, getting up, that's what I mean. 'Or lessons?' Yes, you've got it. We always do want to start them earlier, and not put off till we are so sleepy we can't think or keep our eyes wide open. But it's so difficult. Some one went and gave you a present of a glorious new school story, and on the cover there is a fellow sprinting off at rugger. And you and your brother have had a row about it. You say the chap is in, and he says, 'No! the back is going to get him.' It's going to be difficult to start to lessons till you've had just a peep to find out what really happened, and which of you is right.

No, it's not easy making a new beginning and pulling oneself up. But the great thing is to start. It's like sledging, everything depends on the shove off. Some time ago I came on a wee chap making little of it. He couldn't get going, went a few yards and stuck, and tried again; but no, he couldn't start. Yet, when I gave him a shove off, he went down at such a pace I was quite nervous lest in the papers next day there might be in big black letters, 'Sad Accident in Aberdeen: Young Sledger crashes to his Death.' But he seems to have got off all right. He went down at a great rate once he got under way. And what we need is something to give us a shove off, and set us really going.

That's where a birthday comes in, and a new

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.

year, and a fresh school, and a warning from a teacher, and a word of encouragement, almost anything can do it. A wise man told me the other day that there was once a little fellow who gained a prize at school, and at the break-up the fine old scholar who was presenting the prizes said to him, 'Now, my lad, here is your book, and remember that you got it from a man who once saw Samuel Johnson.' The boy had never heard of Samuel Johnson. Have you? But he went home, and read about him and got so interested that he read more and more and more, everything he could find about him, and then about his times, and on and on. His name was John Richard Green; and he became one of the best of our historians; and he said that it all started because that old gentleman gave him that wee shove off. When you get one, see that you take it, and don't stick any longer. Here's this new term, it's rather like sitting down to a fresh copy-book, isn't it? The last one was fairly messy by the end. It had got pretty blotted and smudged and careless. But with a new one, how careful you are. Your tongue, sticking out in your earnestness, goes round and round, as you carefully form the *o's* and *a's*, and up with the thin up strokes, and down with the thick ones coming back. Well, make a new start like that. You've had a birthday? Isn't it time to tell yourself that sulks are all very well for a kiddie; but you're too old for that by far, and can't sulk any more? It would be just as babyish as for a great huge boy to go about hugging a doll. And the very thought of that, and what the other chaps would say, makes you go red as fire. And yet to sulk is just as awful, really. Or you've changed to a new school, or you've gone up a class, or this is a new year; isn't it time to say to temper, 'You and I have got to part; I've got too old and big to play about with silly things like you.' 'I am resolved what I will do,' said this man. Well, he was a scamp. But in the Psalms there is another, no scamp, but a wise man, who says the very same, 'That I will keep thy precepts all, firmly resolved am I.' What about you? Won't you make up your mind to play the game and put away the ugly things that shame you, to make a new beginning? And if you've tried and tried and never managed, if you can't get going, like that little chap upon his sledge, kneel down to-night and tell Jesus Christ, and He will give you the send-off you need, really He will; and every time you stick and make a mess of it, He will be there to help and push you off once more; till you are going beautifully, and it is quite easy.

Greensleeves the Grasshopper.[1]

'Your adversary . . . walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.'—1 P 5^{8}.

Greensleeves the grasshopper had had a good meal, and he thought that the heart of the bed of nettles where he was just then would be a good place to rest in and have a quiet nap. But just as he was dozing and was nearly ready to dream of a place where grasshoppers could be happy all day long he heard a small buzzing sound. He cocked up a knee to listen, and in a second or two he heard a noise like a giant aeroplane. You would not have heard it at all, for the noise was made by the wings of a wasp; but then, you haven't ears in your knees as Greensleeves the grasshopper had.

'Oh dear,' he cried, 'here's trouble again. Just as I thought I was safe for a quiet sleep.' He folded up his legs, took a deep breath, and gave one big jump just in time. Old Yellow and Black was so near to him that Greensleeves just knocked against one of his wings, and knocked him out of his course. It was the wing in which he had had a touch of rheumatism ever since he fell into a teacup one day, and he dropped down to the ground with a groan and began to rub it very gently.

'I escaped all right that time,' said Greensleeves to himself. He settled down in a clump of horsetail grass and began to fiddle away a scrapy, scratchy sort of tune by using his long hind legs as a bow and his wing-cases as a violin. It wasn't very good music, so it is not worth while trying to reproduce it. But these were the words he was singing in his scratchy, scrapy voice:

If you don't keep alert,
    You'll be caught.
You have to learn to jump
    Quick as thought.
For if you cannot fight,
You will find this plan just right,
You must watch out day and night
    Else you're caught.

He was just going on to the second verse, which is the same as the first, when a ladybird perched on the next grass stem. She shut up her wings with a click, adjusted her glasses, caught her breath, and

[1] By the Reverend W. J. May, Gosport.

remarked, 'Now I'm perfectly sure that's true. I was resting just now after a heavy meal of green-flies and I must have fallen asleep, for the first thing I knew was that I was in a small boy's hand. I know it must have been a small boy's, it was so dirty and sticky.' She began to lift up her feet one by one, 'I am afraid I shall stick fast here. But it was only because I did not keep awake. Will you repeat that song, Mr. Greensleeves, please? I should like to teach it to my children. They are so daring and so careless, and I am sure a moral song like that would do them good.'

Then she had to stop because she was out of breath. Ladybirds always talk like that once you get them talking. But Greensleeves was very flattered. He scraped a few scratchy notes so as to get the right key, then he started off afresh:

If you don't keep awake,
You'll be caught.

'Oh, excuse me,' he cried, and he jumped so high that if you could jump as high according to your size you would jump over the trees. Old Yellow and Black dropped on the ground with another groan because of his rheumatic wing. 'Missed him again,' he cried in a very vexed voice. He raised his head and listened. He could hear Greensleeves' music, so he could not be far away. Off Yellow and Black went again, and once more Greensleeves had to jump 'quick as thought.' It was no use getting cross, and it was no good trying to argue. When old Yellow and Black was after you, you had to move and you had to move quickly.

Greensleeves was unlucky that time. Instead of landing in a grass clump as he had intended to do, he landed on a white stone, so you could see him ever such a distance off. Before he could get his breath there was a big rush and a great row and old Yellow and Black was down on top of him. Greensleeves managed to dodge, and on the smooth stone the wasp couldn't get a foothold, so Greensleeves jumped on to the ground, then picked up his legs, filled his air tubes, gave one big leap and landed in the middle of some tall ears of corn. He kept very still, listened with all his ears, but his enemy seemed to have gone off in some different direction, and down there at the foot of the wheat-ears he was sure old Yellow and Black would never see him.

He listened quite a long time, then he laughed to himself and scraped a few scratchy notes, all out of tune, on his wing-cases, found the right note at last, and began once more:

If you don't keep awake,
You'll be caught.

He did not get any further, for he heard a lady calling in a very shrill, musical voice: 'Keep awake if you like. But if you don't let my babies go to sleep you'll catch something.' Greensleeves had not seen it, but only a few inches away a mother lark was trying to hush her babies to sleep.

'It's not even good music,' she went on, for she was very cross, 'there's neither mirth nor melody in it. Scrape! Scrape! Scrape!'

This was more than Greensleeves could stand, for he was really very proud of his music. He jumped high over the corn and landed a few inches away, where he thought he could fiddle away to his heart's content without disturbing anybody. He had scarcely settled down before he heard a heavy noise like a stout gentleman climbing a steep hill. He turned round quickly and there was a green and bronze beetle coming after him, and that was even worse than old Black and Yellow, unless you kept awake. So off he jumped again and landed in a deep ditch all full of thick grass and weeds, where he really was safe. In fact, Greensleeves was so safe that he invented a second verse to his song that was not exactly like the first verse. It went like this:

There's some one after you
All the time,
Trying to drag you down
When you climb.
If you'd win in spite of all,
Start afresh each time you fall.
Help comes ev'ry time you call,
Oh, that's prime!

But when we talk to grown-up folks who don't like interesting things, we say: 'Your adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour.'

The Christian Year.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

A Heart divided against itself.

'Unite my heart to fear thy name.'—Ps 86^{11}.
'Not overcome of evil.'—Ro 12^{21}.

Preachers saw that in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* there was a vivid and arresting discussion of the old problem of the human heart,

and they literally preached the book into fame. The hero of the book, Dr. Jekyll, at the time he is introduced to the reader, has won name and position for himself. He is wealthy, learned, distinguished. But the Dr. Jekyll whom the world saw—benevolent, brilliant, irreproachable—was not all there was of him. There was another being within him—evil, cruel, sensual, always craving for ugly and debasing pleasures. In the course of his scientific researches Dr. Jekyll discovered a potion by which he was able to give expression to the evil personality within him in a separate identity. He became literally a changed man, shrunken in figure, deformed in build, and of a countenance so sinister as to fill all who looked upon it with aversion and disgust. And to this changed identity expressive of the evil principle within him, he gave the name of Edward Hyde. For a time he rejoiced in his discovery, for when the craving for sensual pleasure was strong upon him, all that he had to do was to change himself into Edward Hyde and he was immediately beyond the recognition of all his friends, and when he had had his fill of such debasing pleasure, all he had to do was to resort once more to the potion and he was at once transformed back again into Henry Jekyll the great scientist, to whose name no breath of slander had ever attached itself. At last evil became dominant, supreme, irresistible. Edward Hyde—the beastly and the vile—mastered and destroyed Dr. Jekyll, and not all the potions he could concoct could turn him into the genial, gracious gentleman of other days. In all of which Robert Louis Stevenson is absolutely true to the solemn facts of experience. It is at his peril that any man indulges the lusts and passions and evil desires that seethe in his soul.[1]

Round this same fact of experience—divided personality—W. J. Locke has woven a short story which he calls *Pontifex.* The hero is a certain Richard Westoby—a thoroughly likeable man with strong family affections. But his heart was not at peace, for he was haunted by a sin of his youth. It was a sin that he would hardly admit to himself, and eventually, after being shell-shocked in the war, he projected the evil into the person of one 'Pontifex.' 'What he looks like? Well'—he hesitated—'he looks very much like me. Same build and colouring—ordinary looking fellow.' It became the one object of his life to protect his family from this Pontifex.

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Gospel of the Sovereignty*, 230.

And so in the disordered state of his mind the end comes. There was the sharp report of a shot and crash. '"I told you I'd face the music myself. I told you you only had to leave it to me." He allowed them to pass him. He pointed to the hearth-rug.

'"There, thank God, that's the end of him!"

'They stared. There was nothing on the hearth-rug. Above the chimney-piece hung a shattered mirror.'

But the poor disordered personality could stand no more. This was the end. 'He gave a curious little cry, clutched at his heart, reeled and fell. He was dead.'

The case of Richard Westoby is more like our own than is that of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. For we are not Dr. Jekyll at one time and Mr. Hyde at another, we are at one and the same time Richard Westoby and Pontifex. This matter of dual personality is not only a fact of experience. It is also a truth of Holy Scripture. Paul declares in that moving seventh of Romans—which is the chapter in which he discusses in fullest detail this matter of dual personality—that on looking into himself he found two opposing principles at work. He found, first of all, a law of God in which he delighted after the inward man; but he found also a different law in his members which brought him into subjection to sin. And between these two there was incessant war. 'For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise.'

Our prayer must be, in the words of the Psalmist, 'unite my heart.' Behind that prayer lies the recognition that his heart was not one, it was two. It was not single, it was double. It is the prayer of a man who was conscious of inward strife. It is the prayer of a man who knew there could be neither peace nor power for him so long as he had a divided heart. Unity is the condition of peace. And so he prays for a united heart, a heart made one; and the unity he desires is unity of the right sort—unity in the love of what is holy and true and good.

1. *The fact of the divided heart.*—Look out upon the world, and everywhere there is evidence of it. It is a world of men of divided hearts. The evil principle that fights against the good and disputes its rule—the world, the flesh, the law of the members, as the New Testament calls it; 'Mr. Hyde,' as Stevenson personifies it—takes many a different guise. In the case of some it takes the form of *love of money.* Mammon divides the soul with God.

That was how the case stood with the rich young ruler. And in the case of others, it takes the form of *love of pleasure*. That is how the case stood with the Prodigal in the story.

And even in cases where the pleasures indulged in are not in themselves sinful, they are allowed unduly to absorb the soul. The prevailing passion for amusement is sterilizing the soul for thousands and robbing God of His due. In their inordinate devotion to self-gratification, men encroach even upon the quiet of the Sabbath, and Sunday golf, Sunday tennis, Sunday motoring, Sunday bridge are becoming increasingly common. They cannot entirely stifle their aspirations after God, but these other and baser affections enter in and divide the heart and dwarf and mar the life.

The 'divided heart'—we all suffer from it. No heart amongst us all is absolutely single, entirely devoted to God. 'There is none that doeth good, no not one.'

2. *The effects of the divided heart.*—There is first the truth, that is almost a truism, that *a divided heart means an unhappy heart.* The condition of perfect happiness is a perfectly united heart. That is the secret of Heaven's bliss. Every trace of evil, every root of bitterness, has been taken out of the heart of the saints, they have 'washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'; they are what we can only aspire to be down here, 'ever, only, all for God,' and as a result they have 'fulness of joy.'

And we can believe that if it were possible for a man to become completely devoted to the love of evil, some sort of peace (even though it were the peace of desolation) might be his possession too. But, as a matter of fact, no man ever does become entirely evil. He cannot forget the good. He may try to stifle conscience, but occasionally Mr. Recorder, as Bunyan puts it, will awake and call back to remembrance better things. Here you really have the secret of the misery and discontent of those who live a worldly life. It is a commonplace that that life brings no happiness.

In the second place, *a divided heart means an ineffective life.* 'Out of the heart,' said our Lord, 'are the issues of life'; but when the heart itself is divided and discordant, the life that issues from it cannot, in the nature of things, be strong, vigorous, positive, aggressive.

The Bible type of the man of divided heart is Reuben. He had good emotions and impulses, but a weak will. He was all on the side of good at one moment, and then allowed himself to be swept into evil the next. And so Reuben became a thing of contempt and scorn. 'Unstable as water,' said his dying father about him, 'thou shalt not excel.' 'He that doubteth,' says the New Testament Apostle in a stern and almost menacing passage, 'is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed.' Like the surge of the sea, like the leaf of autumn—at the mercy of every gust: light, trivial, impotent, ineffective. There may be room for the 'cross-bench mind' in politics—there is absolutely no room for the 'cross-bench' character in morals. To count on the side of right we must be entirely devoted to the right. The men who have done things, the men who have left their mark on the world, the men who have counted for righteousness, were men of single mind and definite purpose. 'This one thing I do,' said the Apostle.

And yet, once again, *a divided heart is unworthy of our God.* Our God is a great God, and He is God alone. He is, moreover, as the Old Testament puts it, a jealous God. Listen to the sweeping and uncompromising claim He makes: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' Some men try to put God off with their affections. Their sensibilities are easily touched; their emotions readily respond to the religious appeal. And some try to put God off with a sort of intellectual assent. They profess the great Christian doctrines. They give God their 'minds.' But God demands not only the emotions and the mind, but the will as well. He asks to be served with the 'strength.' Emotion and creed must be translated into life. And He asks to be served with all of these various parts of human nature. *All* the heart, *all* the soul, *all* the mind, *all* the strength have to be offered to Him.

3. *The secret of the united heart.*—It is only in the fear of God we can really unite the heart. We cannot unite the heart in the service of sin. The Divine that is in it will always be in a state of protest and rebellion. And we cannot entirely get rid of the Divine out of the soul. It is the Divine that makes the soul. It is in its very fabric and essence. We would have to destroy the soul itself before we could get rid of the Divine element in it. And the result is, we can never *unite* the soul in the service of self and sin. But we can unite the heart in the fear and love of God. The soul is eternally and

essentially Divine. But the soul is not necessarily and eternally sinful. Sin is an intrusion in the soul. It came in against the will of God. We cannot get rid of God, but, blessed be God, we can get rid of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. The only chance of a united heart, therefore, is in the fear and love of God.

And now we have this second thought, that the gracious power of our Lord can unite the most divided heart. Locke's story ends on a note of tragedy, but Stevenson's is still more tragic. For there the conflict between the two personalities ends in the complete triumph of evil.

When we turn to the seventh of Romans we read of another and far happier ending. Paul knew the misery of a divided and distracted heart! 'Who shall deliver me,' he cries, 'from the body of this death?' And then he answers his own question with something like a shout of triumph: 'Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!' Jesus had done that for Paul. He had helped him to conquer his sin, to get rid of his sin. He had brought peace to his soul by 'uniting his heart to fear God's name.'

Mind and soul, according well,
Shall make one music as before—but vaster!

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

'Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.'—Mk 7^{34}.

From the borders of Tyre and Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee, right across the country, our Lord went, and wheresoever He went He found people who had need of Him, and whosoever asked His help found it. Human helplessness and need pressed on Him wheresoever He went, and appealed to His compassion. Not merely to His compassion, but to His helpfulness. So, when they bring to Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, our Lord listened to them as they besought Him to lay His hand on him. This man could not hear what his fellows said. That gateway of knowledge was shut. Nor could he communicate to his fellows anything of what he felt, thought, and desired. Such a maimed life appealed to our Lord. 'And he took him aside from the multitude privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue.'

It is the further action in healing the man that we shall consider 'Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said, Be opened'—as it shows us not only Christ's methods of redeeming men, but how we must imitate Him if our service is to be the channel of His power.

1. First, then, note *the Christ that prays*. Before the deed of power, you mark that word of description, 'He looked up to heaven.' The glance and thought passed in a moment, yet in the chain of action it was a vital link. You stand in the engine-room of an ironclad waiting for the signal to go ahead, and at the sharp ring of the telegraph the man beside you touches a handle, scarcely distinguishable in the array of screws and levers; but the movement has liberated mighty forces, and immediately great pistons begin to quiver, and monster shafts to revolve, and the huge vessel goes forging out to sea. That movement, slight yet so effectual, is prayer. It was so even in Christ's life. His concord with the Divine will being absolute, prayer gave Him control of infinite energies, and He used them to realize the great wise purposes of redemption, and fill the empty lives of men.

The habitual dependence of Jesus Christ on prayer is clear in every line of the Gospels. It was His custom, as we know, in the loneliness of His life, to retire from all other fellowship and to spend the night alone with God. But here it was a swift upward look and a swift answer, nor was He alone when He breathed this prayer. There was the patient standing a yard off, with his listless, bewildered face, and a crowd of onlookers edging always nearer. And it was from close beside men, with the multitude pressing round, that Christ lifted up His heart to the Father, and took from Him power to do His blessed work. Time is not of the essence of communion. It may be hours, it may be in a flash; the essential thing is that there be communion. It is a strange idea that prayer is to be kept for brief, strictly fenced-off periods of the day; and that a stray petition which finds its way into working hours is no better than a trespasser, out of bounds and out of place. In that there is very little wisdom. Would you treat an intimate friend like that, giving him one spell of conversation before breakfast and another after supper, but in the interval declining once to open your lips? And if you would not, who is a friend like God or can come so near? In an instant, wherever you are, threading your way along the street, or talking in the family circle, you may pass from the world into the sanctuary, and, like Jesus, be alone with God. Temptation can do

very little harm to the man who has mastered that secret.

2. Again, note *the Christ that pities.* 'Looking up to heaven, he sighed.' One knows instinctively the feeling which wrung that sigh from Him. It was compassion—compassion for a frail, darkened, broken human life. He felt the pathos of things; the deep insights of love revealed to Him the neglect and emptiness and pain of this man's history, for in that age such as he had a cruel lot. Here moved the edge of the dark shadow cast by the suffering that engulfs the world on every side, and in the background hung the darker shadow still of sin. So now, like that other day by the graveside of Lazarus in Bethany, Jesus felt overwhelmingly the pitiful estate of man's weakness, and the hostile power of the wasting foes that prey on life. Beside the tomb of His dead friend, Jesus had thought on all these things and wept; and in pity, now, He sighed.

Does it not prove how much the healing ministry cost the Lord? It meant a ceaseless spending of the treasures of His soul.

The practical maxim that emerges here is plain. Express it as you may, it comes to this, that compassion is an unconditional prerequisite of spiritual helpfulness. There must be something in the worker for God's Kingdom—preacher, evangelist, visitor, keeper of the night-refuge—akin to the pity that from all eternity throbbed in the heart of Jesus Christ.

Jesus touched this deaf and dumb man, and how deep often is the significance of a touch. It is the symbol of brotherhood, love, companionship; it throws a bridge from soul to soul, and across there troop messages of sympathy and kind affection. Friendship is begun when man has touched man, for through that electric contact the sense goes thrilling of frank good-will and a kindred mind.

In touching this man do we not see, in a parable, just what Jesus did for all the world? When He came from the heights of glory into the temptations and sorrows of our life, it was in order that He might be very near us. He touched us, that He might grasp our fallen manhood and lift it up. Nothing less than contact with the lost would serve. All the wonder of the Incarnation is, as in a figure, wrapped and enveloped in that one simple act—He touched him.

It is a simple act; yet is it not one that men are often curiously reluctant to do for one another? Very little efficacy or attraction resides in the philanthropy, or even the evangelism, that stands a good way off and addresses the hearer from the safe distance of holier beings. The zeal that is copious in good advice, but would be alarmed or shocked at the idea of personal contact with the fallen, is not that which devotion to Jesus Christ kindles, or which takes His life for model. There is but one way to help those who need help: to stand at their side, and get hold of their hand, and look into their eyes with unaffected goodwill. The touch is the secret of the cure.

3. Lastly, note *the Christ that commands.* 'He saith unto him, Be opened.' Is not this the difference between our sympathy and Christ's; ours is but a hope and longing, His can save? And He knew it well; nay, it was the sovereign consciousness of power to speak the liberating word that made His pity, for all its intensity, so calm. The mastery of things was His. Is there anything in history even faintly resembling the attitude of Jesus Christ to human need. Mark, it is not the attitude of inquiry; He does not ask questions; the extent, the malignity of the disease are all known before one word is spoken. It is still less the attitude of suggestion; no tentative, cautious diagnosis is offered, no conjecture, no easy promise that if one remedy fail, some other will be tried. Rather it is the attitude of conscious royal command, that utters the very voice of God, and knows that failure is the one thing that cannot be. The word of Christ is a word creative and infallible.

Now that is Christ's prerogative still; for Him to speak and to do are always one. And he says to His followers: All power is given unto *Me*; go *ye* therefore. Like Him we may gain power by prayer, like Him we may pity the sinful and touch the needy, like Him we may speak the word of Divine power over guilt and woe. Remember it is the service He appointed us.[1]

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark.'—Ph $3^{13, 14}$.

1. *The religious use of memory.*—In one sharp and decisive sentence we are shown how the Christian man deals with the legacy of his past. St. Paul is writing to people who seem to have been priding themselves upon what life had already given them.

[1] H. R. Mackintosh, *Life on God's Plan*, 186.

They were thinking and speaking as though they had attained everything of value and nothing lay beyond for them to win. That was the subtle peril of their past experience. Its very greatness was in danger of robbing their future of opportunity.

Here is the figure of a great man confronted with that spirit. St. Paul also has great experiences behind him on which memory loves to dwell. If the Philippians are tempted to live in the past, he has more reason still. But he will not. Life is a race in which the tension is never relaxed—a contest in which the backward glance cannot bring the prize. He will not count himself to have apprehended. The race is not over. He will not think of the steps that have been taken because of the course which has yet to be covered. 'One thing I do,' he says, and the note of decision and finality is in his words, 'One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind—and stretching forward like the runner to the things which are before, I press toward the mark.' You see the force of the figure—the forward bent body of the runner—every muscle strained to reach the goal—the mind intent on what is in front—nothing in his thoughts which would hinder or distract him in the effort which has yet to be made.

The phrase 'forgetting the things which are behind' has an increasing wonder when we think of the man who wrote it, and some of the things in his past experience which he seems willing to forget. It is easy to be understood that St. Paul was not only willing, but even anxious, to forget some of the things which memory recalled. How often, for example, must the memory of Stephen's face have haunted him, and the thought of his own part in that tragedy burdened his mind. Must not the great Apostle have doubted again and again his fitness for his work, just because of the memory of what happened on that one day? It is not wonderful that he should want to forget that. But it is wonderful that he should make no distinction between things like that and some of his other experiences.

How, for example, should he ever want to forget the day on the road to Damascus—the day that changed his whole life? There were other things of a like nature also—for this letter to the Philippians was probably the last letter he wrote—it was the work of an old man with the best part of his life behind him. And yet here he is nearing the end, determined to forget the past in his concentration upon the future. It is a wonderful picture—faith transforming the natural retrospect of old age into confident and youthful anticipation!

But we must not misunderstand the meaning of the phrase. The word 'forget' does not mean that St. Paul wanted to wipe the past out of mind altogether. To erase the past in that complete sense would be to lose all causes of thankfulness—all sense of gratitude at the wonder of God's ways. And that is certainly not the spirit of these words, or of the man who wrote them.

We know well enough from his letters that St. Paul looked back over his life and marvelled at the miracle of God's grace, which in spite of everything had accepted him, and found a work for him to do. For all his victories he gave continued thanks. From all his defeats he extracted the deepest message. 'I thank my God,' he says in one of his letters, 'I thank my God who has always caused me to triumph in Christ.' Even in seeming defeat Paul discovered spiritual victory, and he did not forget to give thanks for what the world would call his weakness. The man who wrote to others, 'in everything give thanks,' practised what he preached.

The memory of the past overwhelmed his soul with thankfulness to the God who had led him and used him in such wondrous ways. To him forgetting the past did not imply the thankless spirit. He never looked back, save to look up. But his resolve to forget what had been was part of a determination not to rest or relax any effort. He would find room for no memory of failure which left depression in its train, nor for the remembrance of victories which might unduly exalt. His should be the tense mind of the athlete, with eyes and thought fixed on the goal. And in that resolve St. Paul is the type and illustration of the Christian spirit with the past behind and the future in front.

This is God's will for every child of His—that men should forget the past and stretch forward towards the mark. God wishes no child of His to go through life with the backward look. Whatever the past may have been—it is not God's will that it should hinder us. There are souls which cannot help recalling memories of downfall. And in consequence they are depressed. Sometimes it is worse than that. The fall may have left so deep a mark on the soul that it seems as if nothing can wipe it out. There are many lives that long above all things to be able to say, 'I will forget the things which are behind.' That word cannot be said of ourselves, but it can be said by every life which

lays hold of God's promises of forgiveness and restoration. It is not His will that one of His children should be held in bondage to the past. For the very first of His dealings with the soul is to set it free.

But if past failure has its perils, past victory has even more. And the gravity of this danger lies in the fact that, while every man must long to escape from the thought of defeat, few wish to be free from the memories of triumph and success. Yet it is equally necessary in the interest of the future. This is the danger which we can see overtaking men, both individually and collectively. How often do we discover in human life a growth in spirit up to a certain point, till success smothers it, and an idle contentment takes its place. We find it easy to be content with conformity to the average. Measuring ourselves by our fellows we find little reason for criticism and heart-searching. How few of us are in this attitude of straining forward depicted by St. Paul! We have become the victims of the past and we have the warrant of the Gospels for saying that such a state is the gravest into which any soul can fall. It was the self-satisfied, with whom our Lord could do nothing. Before Christ can do His work in any life its contentment has to be shaken, and if that is a danger which belongs to individual men it is surely evident enough in communities.

The day of peril for states and nations lies not in the strenuous times when their glory is in the making, but in the season of peace which follows. If no man can afford to live upon his past, no nation can take that course with impunity. Then it is that contentment with its kindred evils creeps into the spirit of a people and decay and decline set in.

As with men and nations, so with churches—life is bound up with the forward step, and the eyes on the distant goal. The past may be a help if it is remembered so as to draw from it inspiration for present opportunity. It can only be a hindrance if it leads to a glorying which spends all its energy in speech. All the glory of past days increases the responsibility of those on whom such an inheritance descends. Well did St. Paul speak of 'a weight of glory,' for all glory is a burden to be carried by those who claim a share in its lustre.

2. *The splendour of the goal.*—Our hearts are filled with praise as we think of the years that have passed, and all that they have witnessed—at great and hallowed names, at tasks accomplished, and victories achieved. We are thankful also for God's continued goodness to us—at every quiet evidence that His Spirit is still with us, and His blessing upon our work. But in the midst of such memories we need to remind ourselves that the God to whom we look in gratitude summons us forward. He has new tasks for us to do. There are conquests yet to be made. 'I follow after—I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'[1]

'I remember,' says Dr. Jowett,[2] 'I was once appointed to preach at Saddleworth. It was a "supply" on our college list. I stayed with an old farmer. After the afternoon service I put up at his house until the time of the evening train. And the darkness fell; and the quiet day turned to a very stormy night, and soon the rutty roads were living streams. When the time for my train was getting near my friend gave me a farm lantern, "just to help you to see where you are going, and to keep you out o' the ditch!" Well, that was something, but he added something that made it better. "Do you see that glimmer of light yonder?" "No, where?" And then he trained my eyes to catch a far-off gleam that looked miles away. "That is Saddleworth Station; make for that!" The two things gave me what I needed. The old, worn lamp gave me light for my feet, and each step became clear, and that glimmer of the distant scene gave me cheer and appointed the course of my journey.'

And this surely is something like what the Apostle Paul had upon the way of his troubled and stormy life. There was always something shining through the gloom and confusion, even 'the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' His imagination was always lit up with the splendour of the goal. His eyes were never empty of light. The goal was never separated from his steps. It inspired every step he took.

And so the Apostle followed on to the next step because of the continued inspiration he found in the goal. He drew reserves from the distance and they gave spring and buoyancy to his feet. Indeed, it may be said that he took the very next step in a sort of association with the final step. The ultimate was wedded to the immediate. He practised walking in the golden streets even while his feet were still on the flinty roads. That is the wonderful thing about God's shining goals. They come out to meet you. They are like the mysterious island in

[1] S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 110.
[2] *Life in the Heights*, 172.

'Peter Pan'—we go out to seek the island, and we discover that the island is out seeking us.

And one further word about the ministry of the goal. It is the feeling for the distant that so often reveals what the next step is to be. We discipline and refine our sense of the immediate by our fellowship with that which is far away. Our eyes acquire a keenness and we discover an increased power of discernment. And so there is something profitable in star gazing! It strengthens the eyes for the nearer tasks. It is more than likely that we shall increase our common sense by enlarging our spiritual sense, and that our immediate duties will become clear in the light of the ultimate vision.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

'The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.'—Mk 7^{26}.

The two companion pictures of Jacob at Peniel and of this woman on the borders of Tyre and Sidon represent the same spiritual theme from two different standpoints. In both, the central figure is that of wrestling, overcoming faith; in both, the Divine Spirit humanizes Himself, in order to make the human more divine. 'Now,' says Samuel Rutherford, who gave a whole book to the treatment of this narrative—'now, though there be no passions, as there are no infirmities in God, yet the flower, the blossom, the excellency of all these are infinitely in God: He striketh, and trieth, and yet pitieth.' At Peniel, there is 'the likeness of the hands of a man' under the wings; and so here, God in carrying out the counsel of His own will, takes something of man's way to do it.

We hold out our hands to God, and say, 'What we want, what we cry for, is the good gift.' And God replies, 'I cannot place the good gift except in fit hands.' Jacob wrestled for the blessing and Name: the Heavenly Visitor wrought to produce in Jacob a better heart to receive the blessing, a finer spirit to discern the Name. And the same patient discipline appears in this kindred incident. We cannot for a moment think of Christ as merely posing when He at first refused, and used harsh language; nor was it a mere 'trial' of faith. Christ met an exceptional soul; untutored, it is true, but brave and keen: to have given at once would have been like much of our modern charity—a donation to save trouble.

1. She cried to Him as David's son, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.' From her lips that phrase was either meaningless—a mere catchphrase—or else, if she meant it, it spoilt her case. If He really was no more than the son of David—an 'Israelitish Messiah,' pure and simple—then He could have no gift for her. If He did give her anything, it must be, as it were, surreptitiously, going behind His proper exercise of His Messiahship. Now Christ cannot allow any one to receive a gift from Him with a feeling that justice has been winked at in order that he might receive the gift. All His gifts are open: He forgives and saves 'in the presence of the angels of God.'

'He answered her not a word.' Happily, while His silence continued, the disciples made the right answer—brusquely enough, it is true, but still right—to her request. If there is no other ground for her plea than that which she has insinuated, away she must go, unblest.

What made it harder was that there was a strong element of truth at the root of their petition. 'Send her away: for she crieth after us.' He took them back to that truth—'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel.' If so, she must be sent away, must she not? We feel sure that Christ was as anxious to give as she was to ask: but to Him she and the gift were too precious to be spoilt in the transaction.

2. Who can say what glimmerings of clearer light trembled in the windows of her soul when she 'came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me'? She calls Him no longer 'Son of David,' but 'Lord'—as though her little ship, denied admission to the secure harbour, would now trust the large sea. The development of the incident proves that she used it considerately; she was quick to correct herself, and open her mind to something in His face that helped her; but it would be unnatural to conclude that she had in one brief moment rid herself of all her limitations. She still dragged her anchor. 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.' 'Not *meet*'—how much is explained in that one word. We may paraphrase thus: 'You came to me, looking upon me as the Jewish Deliverer; to My people you know what you are; and lest you should have forgotten, you have been reminded of it by the request of these disciples of Mine, to send you away, and save them from being worried by you; you cry for help in a conflict of dawning light and old darkness: can I, even yet, take the children's bread, and cast it to the little dogs? Is

it meet? would it appear a beautiful deed—beautifully just?'

'Truth, Lord'—she replies, still clinging to the new term—'yet the dogs,' the little dogs, 'eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' She makes a claim upon Israel: the table is theirs, but so, too, are the dogs: 'Their *master's table*.' And surely, the Lord of Israel will not ill-treat or deny mercy to the meanest of Israel's own property! Whatever we are, are we not Thine?

She has wrestled, and overcome. She has risen to the height of the gift; and even in her reward there is an inner prize: 'Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.'

3. She carries her gift away, not as something outside, but as a very portion of her own soul. Her faith must continue to operate, her will abide in touch with her Lord's. She found, when she went home, 'the devil gone out,' it is true; but her daughter exhausted and 'laid upon the bed.' So her faith must still support her, and initiate her child into the ways of the Kingdom. How often, during the days and weeks that followed, must she have felt the tremor and the thrill of those great words—'even as thou wilt.' Her faith must be living, her will alert, to protect her home and keep alight on her hearth the flame of joy.

4. This, therefore, seems to be, not a mood of Jesus, but a method of God, more strikingly illustrated than usual, but still one with His whole way. The Christ who sat over against the treasury, and 'beheld how the people cast money' in, beholds also 'how' we receive. He is more concerned for our spirit in receiving, while we are more concerned for the gift we hope to receive. When we ask, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' Christ does not allow us to pause there; we must proceed—'And forgive.' Then again, lest we should think that forgiveness comes with the asking whatever our state may be, He teaches us to say, 'Forgive us, as we forgive.' He that receives from Him must rise to the height of the gift, whatever may be the cost.

5. The trial varies with the value of the gift expected, and with the natural endowment of the soul. When our Lord exclaimed, 'O woman, great is thy faith,' He explained the whole incident. Here was faith worth teaching: it would have been spiritually criminal to send such faith away with paltry reward, or even with a great reward if it did not include faith's own culture and employment.

Prayer means much to God; more than we know, more than we can think. 'Prayer is, to God, worship; to us, often, it is but a servant, upon mere necessity, sent on a business.' In this, too, the Divine Spirit humanizes Himself; 'as a father will cause his child say over again what he even heard him say, because he delighteth to hear him speak.'

If this be, not a mood of Jesus, but a method of God, it helps us to discern the same truth in still vaster issues. If the receiving soul must be raised to the height of the gift, we can understand how forgiveness, how redemption becomes ours only 'through his blood' (Eph 1^7). In forgiving, God must stand at the height of His love; in being forgiven, the sinner, too, must rise to the height of the gift. The Cross measures that height for God and for man.[1]

[1] H. E. Lewis in *Women of the Bible*, 183.

'He descended into Hell.'

By the Reverend Buchanan Blake, D.D., Glasgow.

These words are found in the final form of the Apostle's Creed, and they are generally explained by the phrase, 'He descended into the state of the dead.' They do not appear in the oldest Roman form of the Creed, but were in use in the Aquileian Church. The early Church was concerned to maintain that, as Christ was a true man, He actually passed through all that death means. Hence, against a false docetic view of the humanity of our Lord, there was inserted in the Creed the article, 'He was buried.' In the other form the phrase was, 'He descended into Hell,' and this was held to be another way of declaring His death and burial. In the final form of the Creed both forms of expression are used. Thus we read, 'He was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into Hell.' As attention is now being given to the importance of having a simple creed on which all the Churches