

The
Secret
of the



Singing Heart

By C. W. Naylor

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C. W. Naylor

*Author of "God's Will and How to Know It,"
"Winning a Crown"*



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For twenty-one years, C. W. Naylor has been confined to his bed—a constant sufferer. It is in this school of isolation and suffering that he learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

If a man can learn to sing the song of joy under such circumstances, we are safe in affirming that anyone in any circumstances can learn it, if he has the secret the author possesses. This man of God was a minister of the gospel for thirteen years prior to the internal injury as a result of an accident, which wholly incapacitated him for the active work of the ministry. He faced the future with no prospect but helpless invalidism and with no means of earning a livelihood. He sought out a solution of the tremendous problems before him, and with the help of his Lord, not only learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart* for himself, but through him, multitudes of others have been caused to rejoice and be glad.

We commend this book to the reader who would be happy, as a companion in his daily walk of life.

PREFACE

“Oh, why did not someone tell me sooner?” wrote a lady who had passed through some very trying spiritual experiences that had been made far harder because they had been misinterpreted. It had been the Author’s privilege to explain some things through which she was passing. She had experienced great relief of mind and spirit by coming to look on her troubles in a new and clearer light.

About the same time another person, after receiving an explanation of difficulties and being instructed how to meet them wrote, “If I had known these things years ago I might have been spared many things and my life thereby made far happier than it has been.”

The receipt of hundreds of such letters and the personal testimony of other hundreds of people, through the years spent by the author in evangelistic work and the twenty-one years on his bed as the result of accidental injuries, have convinced him that there is much need for a treatise covering some of the vital principles of life and experience common to so many of us.

It has been the author’s purpose to illuminate, as far as his ability goes, the Christian pathway, as well as to point out some of the underlying principles of Christian life and experience. If he has succeeded in doing so, in a way that will be helpful to others to an extent comparable to the gratifying results of his more personal work and correspondence, he will feel he has been well rewarded for his labors. He hopes he has

succeeded in making clear the way into the joyfully victorious life and that the reader may walk life's way with the "everlasting joy" that belongs to those who have learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

—C. W. Naylor

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The Secret of the Singing Heart

CHAPTER I THE FOUNTAIN OF SONG

"The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing."—Isaiah 14:7.

Nature is joyful. There is something that wells up in the heart of things which breaks forth in song. We have heard of the music of the spheres. There is a harmony which makes itself heard above the discords. This world is not a place of melancholy. Its drab colors when properly blended become beauteous. Its discords may be merged into harmonies.

Happiness is the normal state of all life. Our tears are meant to be only the cleansing grain which refreshes and beautifies life. There is an echo of far-off music in all the sounds of nature. Rejoicing is everywhere. Happiness is God's will for all His creation. "Sing, O ye heavens...shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein..." Isaiah 44:23.

This universal joyfulness is also thus expressed, "...The valleys...shout for joy, they also sing." Psalm 65:13. Again, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy..." Psalm 67:4. In nature, sentient things are happy even though life for them is full of danger and hardship. The birds sing even though they know they are surrounded by enemies. Constant dangers do not silence their songs.

In spite of all the cruelties of fang and claw, and undeterred by storms or cold, hunger or privation, the voice of joy still rises in melody.

Man is likewise permeated by the same cause of joyfulness. Difficulties may come, dangers may surround him, he may make failures, have losses and sometimes almost despair. Notwithstanding all this, his spirits will ever rise superior to his difficulties, and the song of joy is never fully quenched in any normal human being. Troubles, when they lie in the past, may be quickly forgotten. The young trees bent over by the snowfall rise again when the snow is melted to gaze anew upon the sun. So man rises from his troubles. He lifts his head up into the sunshine, and again his heart breaks forth in joyfulness. The heart is naturally merry, and God would ever have it so. He says, "...My servants shall sing for joy of heart..." Isaiah 65:14.

While preparing to write the chapters that follow, I took my concordance and Bible and looked up some of the words that express rejoicing and happiness, such as rejoicing, gladness, happy, blessed, joy, rest, etc. I found that these words and others of similar import occur *nearly nine hundred times* in the Scriptures. Even then my search was only partial. Assuredly this fact should convince us not only that happiness is the natural state of man, but that it is God's will for him.

Again and again we are exhorted to rejoice, to be glad and to give expression to our joy. The poet has said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Joy is more powerful than sorrow. Peace is more lasting than trouble. Sorrow is but transitory. Life has balm for all our woes, light for all our darkness. Morning breaks after the darkest night. There is sunshine after the fiercest storm. There is warmth and beauty after the cruel winter. In the normal life happiness is the

rule; unhappiness the exception. Troubles will come. There are things to be endured, but these need not take out of life its beauty, its happiness or its worth.

One thing should ever be present in our thoughts of life. Our happiness does not depend upon our environment, our station, our circumstances, or any external thing. The songs come from within. They bubble up out of the heart. Someone has spoken a great truth in the lines that follow:

*"There's no defeat in life
Save from within.
Unless you're beaten there
You're bound to win."*

It is what we are within that counts. It is our outlook on life, our purposes, our ideals, our hopes, our faith. They are joyful beggars. The most thankful, the most appreciative, are often those who have little. Some of the most contented, cheerful and light-hearted people I ever saw were people whose situations seemed least tolerable. In my ministry I have gone into homes where poverty abounded, where sickness and sorrow existed, yet I found in some of those homes happy, trustful, rejoicing hearts.

Favorable external circumstances may encourage the song in the heart, but the lack of these things need not still the song. External things alone cannot produce a song in the heart. A favorable condition of heart is like the reed of the wind instrument. The wind itself can produce no music without the reed. So the music in human hearts is born in hearts, and as the reed in the instrument makes the instrument vocal, so the proper qualities in the heart make joyous music even in the night of sorrow.

Too many people have a wrong philosophy of life. The pessimist makes his own clouds. The optimist sees the sunshine on the other side of the clouds and is happy. Some modern idealistic religious systems, though based on false metaphysics and a false natural philosophy, have, outside of these things, a true philosophy of happiness and success, at least for the present life. Many of us could learn much from these philosophies that would be very helpful. We need not accept the vagaries of their metaphysics or natural philosophy nor their spiritual concepts, but the philosophy of the hopeful outlook, the expectation of success, and the discounting of that which is unpleasant and undesirable, is the true way to happiness. The God who made the birds that sing so sweetly desires the same melody of song in the heart of the highest of His creation. Believing this, we face life with the elements that create melody active in our hearts to teach us the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

CHAPTER II

A GREAT ADVENTURE

Life has wonderful possibilities for good or for evil. It may be a great adventure upon which we go, with ever changing scenes, through which we may march with our heads up and a song of victory in our hearts. To many, life *is* this. On the other hand, life may mean a servitude in which the weary, discouraged and almost hopeless prisoner of fate marches on toward an eternal dungeon. One may be a slave to worry, fear, foreboding. Life may be a series of defeats. But this is not the normal life. No one need live such a life.

Life was intended to be triumphant, joyous and prosperous. It was meant to be filled with gladness, with light hearts and with singing. Facing life as we are capable of facing it, we can make it an ever ascending pathway with our vision expanding to an ever remoter horizon. Life may be a series of discoveries. A great American said, "I shall pass this way but once." Each day there is new territory to be explored, new experiences to be had.

The terrain of our life is largely of our own choosing. We may go on the upland way or down through the swamps. We may have the fragrance of flowers and of fruit, of pines and cedars, or we may have the miasma of decaying vegetation. Life is full of boundless possibilities. It is a great continent lying before us awaiting exploration. Shall we go through it with bowed heads and burdened shoulders, or shall we cast off our burden, lift up our heads and be men and women in the midst of a great adventure?

Explorers do not always have an easy time. Frequently they have great difficulties to overcome. But exploration gives zest to life. The constantly changing scenes always bring freshness of interest. The difficulties and privations of the past are quickly forgotten in the inspiring prospect that lies before us. We need to cultivate in life the spirit of the explorer. We need to develop our possibilities, our capabilities, and have the inspiration of a great purpose.

It is so easy to say, "Oh, I do not amount to anything. I never can be anything. I never can do anything worthwhile," then to settle down in the prison house of this idea and attitude and never be free, not because we might not be free but because we do not choose to be free. So often people say, "My life is not worth living." Every life is worth living, but every life is *worth living right*. So many lives are like an airplane that is so heavily loaded it can never gain altitude.

There are some things of which we must rid ourselves in order to live a normal life. A bird entangled in the grass cannot fly. It must first be freed from its entanglement. In like manner we must be loosed from our entanglement to have freedom of life. Our entanglements are often of our own making. We build our own prisons; we shut ourselves up in our own cells. Circumstances can never long imprison us if our spirits are free. Has not someone written, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage?" The free spirit cannot be imprisoned. Let us not be content with servitude. Let us cry out with Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty," and then strike with the sword of a determined will to cut out a way through whatever may imprison or hamper us. Do you say, "This is easier said than done?" True, but it can be done by everyone. It is well within the possibilities of each of us.

What are we getting out of life? In the first place, we can get out of it no more than we put into it. So if we are getting too little out of our lives, if they are unsatisfying, or impoverished, or hemmed in, it is because we are putting too little into them. Our lives are what we make them. It is not how *long* we live but how *intensively* we live, how full of worthwhile things we fill our lives that make them worthwhile and satisfying.

Life, in reality, is what we are within. Circumstances are the casket in which lies the jewel of personality. The value is not in the casket but in the jewel. Therefore, life is not made up of favorable or unfavorable circumstances, nor of possessions either many or few, nor of recognition or the lack of it, nor of honors given by others. It is what we are that gives quality to all these things when they come into life. We can take musical sounds and blend them to produce either harmony or discord. Things can be made either helpful or harmful.

Chemical elements can be combined to create wholesome things or poisonous things. It depends upon the elements we put into our lives and how we combine them as to whether we have happiness or unhappiness. If we put into our lives selfishness, disregard of others, unkindness, discourteousness, ill-temper, complaints, murmuring, distrust, doubts, fear, hate, malice, envy, covetousness and the like, we shall inevitably have bitterness, dissatisfaction, sorrow and similar things in our lives as the natural result. Let us not say that God makes our life as it is, or that it is our lot, or that people wrong us.

No, we are making the quality, if not the form and outline of our lives. Circumstances alone neither make us nor mar us. It is our reaction to circumstances that produces results in us. What ruins one makes another.

The things that are obstacles in life to some become stumbling stones, but to others stepping stones, according to the use made of them.

So after all, what we shall have in life is our own choice. We are the architects of our own lives. If we build with noble materials, carved with patient care, we shall have beauty and grace in our lives. If we put into them love, loyalty, gentleness, meekness, kindness, faith, forbearance, patience and hope, we shall not fail to draw good dividends from all these things—dividends which shall rejoice our hearts, cause our eyes to sparkle and the song of gladness to well up.

The purpose of life is not merely to have a good time, to gratify the senses, to eat, drink and be merry. Its high and holy purpose is the building of character. Good character is the basis of real happiness. The poet has said,

*"Only the holy and innocent sing
Out of a bosom where pleasures abide."*

The process of character building is not always easy, but it is always profitable. Each of us has capacity to develop a great character, a noble and beautiful life which cannot be unhappy. In such a soul there is a depth into which trouble never can reach. No matter how trials and troubles may press in upon the life, there is a calm and undisturbed peace at the very center of life. There is a joy that springs up on the darkest days. There is a light that shines in the deepest night. Life must have its discipline and its difficulties to make it of value, to give it character. Iron ore is of little value until it passes through the fire and is purified, tempered and shaped. The chisel must bite deeply into the marble again and again before the angel in it looks out. Paint

of little value, when carefully spread upon the canvas by a great artist, becomes of rare beauty and worth. Likewise the little things, seemingly valueless in our lives, become richer than a king's ransom when their possibilities are developed.

The Christian life of many people is unsatisfying. Instead of being joyous with the elements of heaven, it is burdensome. There are two causes for this. If, when we come to God, we still cling to the things of the past and try to graft Christianity upon our old lives, we shall not have the fruits of righteousness. There must be a break with the past. There must be a newness of life. We must be new creatures. Gone with the old life that is forsaken will be many of the causes of heartaches and sorrows and burdens of the past. However, if when we come to God we give up many things that have gone far to make up life for us in the past, and we do not replace these things with something just as good or better, we impoverish ourselves, and our lives become barren and unsatisfying.

We should fill our lives with the better things, the pleasant things of righteousness, truth, nobility and service, that make life rich for ourselves and profitable to others. We need the freshness and beauty of true spirituality. We need activities—interesting and profitable things.

God said to us, "Rejoice and be glad." The Christian life is full of wonderful possibilities. I do not mean merely the formal and empty shell of Christian profession. I mean the inner divine life begotten by the Holy Spirit. A life spent in exploring the kingdom of God on earth is always an interesting, attractive and happy life.

Let us make our lives a great adventure. It is our privilege now and then with heart and mind to make an excursion to heaven, there to sit and meditate beside

the river of God. We can go back through history and become acquainted with the saints of old. We can have fellowship with their joys. We can drink of the “river of pleasure” and eat of the “honey out of the rock.” We can live love’s way—bask in the sunlight of heaven. We can “run and not be weary, and walk and never faint.”

CHAPTER III

MAKING A GOD

One of the most important things in life is that we have the right sort of a god. Religion has a profound influence upon the lives, not only of Christian people but of those who are under Christian influences and those who are under false religions. It is important therefore that we have in our mind a correct, though of necessity only a partial, knowledge of God. There is but one God, but the picture of that God that is in the minds of men differs greatly. As this picture differs in different minds, we differ in our concepts of the reality.

Within the past week someone wrote to me and spoke of God's "casting men into hell, then watching them sizzle in a lake of fire." This is a crude and altogether erroneous idea of God. Nevertheless, one who believes in such things cannot but be profoundly affected by such a belief. The heathen idea of God is often of a fearful being, vengeful and terrible. Such a god inspires fear, a terror, and often despair. The instinct of the worshiper is to try to placate such a god. The heathen may fear this type of a god, but he cannot love him. Happiness cannot come into his life through such a god. A god of this sort exists only in imagination, but the effect upon the life is just as real as though such a god were real.

The idea we have of God will profoundly affect our lives. The god we have is the god we create in our lives; that is, God means to us in our consciousness and in His influence on our lives what we picture Him to be in our mental conception of Him. Someone has said, "God

created man in God's image, then straightway man created God in man's image." The Greek and Roman gods had the form, the characteristics and the passions of the men who created them. The gods of the heathen are made in their own likeness mentally, morally and spiritually. In olden times a Greek said, "If the camels had a god, he would have four feet and a hump."

The development of the idea of God among the Hebrews can be traced in the Scriptures. Before Israel went into Egypt, the idea of God seems to have been of a universal God, a God who was God of all the earth and not of a special people. But during the captivity in Egypt, surrounded as they were by idolaters, and they alone holding the idea of the true God, He became to them the God of Israel. After the Exodus He became to the great body of the people little more than a tribal God. He was viewed in the same light by the nations round about them. It is true that the most spiritual, including the prophets and spiritual teachers, had clearer ideas of God. But we do not find a general conception of Him any higher than a tribal God until we reach the era of the Psalms. In these we find both ideas—the God of Israel, and the God of the earth and all nature. As we go on through the Major and Minor Prophets we find a clearing and expanding of the idea of God. This made an end to idolatry in Israel.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah has the greatest conception of God. But it is Jesus who reveals Him as He is. The God revealed by Jesus is a God of universal character. He became not only the universal God but the universal Father.

The idea of God develops slowly. When the gospel is carried to a heathen land, it is difficult for the people to grasp the Christian idea of God. It dawns on them only a little at a time. This is true even in Christian lands.

Even today, the views of God held by many people differ widely from God as Jesus revealed Him and as He is revealed in the Christian Scriptures.

What sort of a God have you, reader? Sum up the various ideas of Him you have and see what He is in the aggregate. How does He impress you? How do you feel toward Him? Do your ideas of God bring happiness into your heart? Do they cause you to love Him and trust Him? Does contemplation of Him start the joy-bells ringing in your heart and the song to come to your lips? To some people, God is a giant to be feared. We do not sing in His presence—we try to hide. When we fear, we do not sing. If we fear God with this slavish fear, how can we be happy?

One of the *secrets of the singing heart* is to make a God who will inspire us to sing. God, in reality, is a God of that sort. If we know Him as He is, association with Him will be the source of life's sweetest and most satisfying fountain of joy.

Jesus identified the greatest source of human happiness when He said, "That they may know Thee." Again, He said to His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, Ye believe in God." To Him that was sufficient reason why one should not be troubled. But some people believe in God, and it is that very belief which causes them to be troubled. They do not see God as Jesus saw Him. The God they see has different characteristics—characteristics that inspire fear rather than love. They worship Him with the idea of placating Him. They do not look upon worship as communion with Him, as a sweet, soul-satisfying fellowship and the source of life's greatest joys and blessings.

Perhaps it would be of great value to all of us if we should read the New Testament carefully with the idea in mind of finding just what it teaches about God. Let

us try to get Jesus' idea of God and John's idea and Paul's idea. When we have done so, we may be amazed to see how much our own ideas of God have differed from theirs. God may come to mean something entirely different to us.

Let us briefly view the outline of the picture of God painted in the New Testament. First, we are told that "God is love." A God of our mind, that we as Christians fear, is not the real God. John 3:16 tells us, "God so loved the world..." and Paul asked, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Again he says, "...That ye...may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge..." Ephesians 3:18-19. We might profitably spend days considering these Scriptures. Think of them, dear reader, until they mean to you in your innermost heart just what they say; until God's character actually becomes love in your consciousness. Then you cannot fear Him, you cannot shrink from Him. You will love Him.

God's loving, gentle, forgiving, pitying character can never inspire fear. We need not fear His justice, for His justice is only for those who will not have His mercy. To really know God is to love and to trust Him. Note particularly the following facts: Only those who will not believe have cause for this slavish fear.

Those who have cause for fear do not fear Him, as it is written, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Therefore, only those who have no occasion thus to fear God do thus fear Him. The true God is the God of the open heart, the Father who loves His creatures. He is not a God afar off. He is a God who is near. He is not harsh, and stern, and vengeful. He is high, and powerful, and glorious, yet He condescends to walk with us

in the lowly vales of life. He condescends to talk with us in the quiet of the evening. He has a listening ear and a tender heart.

He is our Father, and our Father loves us as sons and daughters. "...Ye shall by my sons and daughters,... saith the Lord almighty." II Corinthians 6:18. Sometimes an earthly father must be stern. But his sternness is because he loves his son and desires the best for him. The loving father disciplines his son, not for the father's own pleasure but for the son's profit. The sternness and the discipline are the special, not the ordinary attitudes of God toward us. His constant attitude is one of tender, solicitous love.

God is not only the God of the open heart, but He is the God of the open hand. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. His promise is that He will "not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly." He desires that we be happy. He desires that we be supplied with everything that will contribute to our happiness. Truly He is the God of the open hand.

He is also the "...God of all comfort." II Corinthians 1:3. The Psalmist said, "...Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 23:4. Paul speaks of Him on this wise, "Blessed be God,...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." II Corinthians 1:3-4. The Holy Spirit is the "Comforter." John 14:26. Reader, is this the picture of God you have in your mind and heart?

He is the God of justice. The Bible says, "...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25. A number of times Jesus is called "The Just One." His

justice is always tempered with mercy. It is never separated from His love. If we have the picture of God in our minds that David had in his mind, we shall feel as he felt. He had sinned. The prophet gave him the choice of three evils as punishment. He said, "Let me fall into the hands of God." God's promise to the Christian is that he "shall not come into condemnation." What then if God be just? "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." It is God's delight to forgive; therefore if we submit to Him we need not fear His justice.

He is a faithful God. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son..." I Corinthians 1:9. Again and again it is declared that God is faithful. Peter calls Him "a faithful Creator." I Peter 4:19. The Psalmist says, "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations..." Psalm 119:90.

God is the God of goodness. The Psalmist exclaims, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee..." Psalm 31:19. And again, "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD." Psalm 33:5. "...The goodness of God endureth continually." Psalm 52:1. And again he says, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness..." Psalm 65:11.

He is not a God afar off. Paul said to the Athenians, the Lord is "...not far from everyone of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being..." Acts 17:27-28. "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him..." Psalm 145:18. And Jesus said, "...Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20. And He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The foregoing is a very partial picture, a very fragmentary outline of the character of God. But if we study the picture, as it is painted in the New Testament, until

God comes to be to us what He really is, and if we then enter into relations with Him such as He desires to exist between Himself and us, we then shall know one of the *secrets of the singing heart*. Too often, God (to us) is only the reflection of our fears and doubts, of our consciences and of our peculiar characteristics. In reality, He is what He reveals Himself to be.

To Moses, God revealed Himself thus, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." Exodus 34:6-7. He promised Moses, "...My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Exodus 33:14. Our thoughts of Him should not disturb us. His presence shall give us rest.

We should dwell before Him in confidence and trust. He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He is the Father of tender love and constant care. He would enter into all our troubles, our sorrows, our joys. He has said He would rejoice over us with singing. He has said He would have us without anxiety; He would have us abide in His love, partake of His peace, rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" and sing the songs of victory and trust.

One writer has said of the Bible, "It tells us that at the heart of the universe there is a heart, that God is love, that that love is the moving spring of His activity."

CHAPTER IV

FIVE KINDS OF RELIGION

Christianity is a singing religion. The coming of Jesus was ushered in with the joyful chants of the heavenly throng. Singing has ever been a prominent part of the worship of God. When the soul has a vision of the God revealed in the New Testament, it is uplifted, illuminated, inspired, exalted. This exaltation naturally bursts forth into heavenly songs—songs of joy and true happiness.

The vast wealth of song written by Christians and used in their religious devotions is in a strange and almost startling contrast to the lack of song in the other religions of the world. Music has little part in the worship of other systems of religion. The American Indian may sing his war song, song of the chase, or other similar songs in his religious festivals. The votaries of other religions may also sing songs, but these are generally not songs of worship but songs to placate their gods, rather than attempts to express their own joyfulness in their service of their gods. It is true that Buddhism in some countries is borrowing the Christian custom of song in worship and adapting Christian hymns to their worship. It should be noted, however, that this is a mere adaptation in the face of Christian competition rather than something that originated in Buddhism. So Christianity may be said to be the only singing religion including, of course, the worship of Israel, from which it has in a great measure been derived.

Religion has a powerful influence upon happiness. It adds much to or takes much from natural happi-

ness, according to the kind of religion in which we believe. Christians do not all believe in the same sort of religion. True, they all believe in one God, and in one Bible, and in a general way in many of the same things. When we come to the practical side of religion, however, there are about five kinds of the Christian religion. Four of these produce little happiness, in fact may hinder happiness. They may stifle the song that would naturally arise from the free heart. The reader will do well to pause and consider, as we notice these five kinds of religion, which he has, if any, or if he has a mixture of them.

First, there is the *don't* religion. It is the religion of self-denial. It is hedged in with numerous restrictions. It is a religion in which the worshiper is kept in a straight jacket. It is largely a negative religion. Those having this religion may be very strict, very sincere, very earnest, but they never can be truly happy. Happiness never comes from the purely negative aspect of life. When we deny ourselves anything in religion, the purpose would not be merely that we be without it, but that we may put in its place something greater, something that will contribute more to our happiness and well being. Religion is intended to make people free, with the highest type of freedom. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed," is the slogan of the New Testament. A don't religion is conducive to bondage. There is a sort of satisfaction in this don't religion. It may gratify the sense of duty, but we must get a different sort of religion in order to know the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

The second kind of religion is the *do* religion. It consists of merely following forms and ceremonies or obeying rules and regulations or doing works of merit. Its followers may find considerable satisfaction in reading

prayers, bowing down and arising, in making the sign of the cross, in keeping holy days, in making pilgrimages, in closely following outlined ceremonials and going through forms. Some of the forms of religion have a certain value in giving soul uplift, but they are a poor substitute for the realities of true religion. With this formalism there may be stately singing by trained choirs, there may be grand organs pealing forth, there may be intellectual discoursing, but with the heart of genuine religion absent. The esthetic sense is gratified while the soul is left unfed or perhaps impoverished. This *do* religion trusts in works. It draws much satisfaction from what it has done. There was much of this sort of religion among the old Pharisees. But who ever saw a Pharisee who was truly happy, whose heart sang with joy? No, a religion of mere works, of forms and ceremonies, can bring little true happiness.

Another form of religion is the *Sinai* religion. It hedges in lives with "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." It is the mere keeping of commandments. It is a worshiper of authority. It is doing because one must. It is refraining from doing for fear of punishment. The God of Sinai still thunders forth in this religion. He is a great and awful God, crowned with majesty and glory, but far removed from the worshiper. He is worshiped in fear and trembling at the foot of the mountains whose summit is hidden in angry clouds. Out of these clouds flash the lightnings of divine vengeance. It is a stiff and rigorous religion. There is little of grace or mercy in it. It is walking by rule. There is little in it to start the songs that come from a peaceful and happy heart.

Then there is what may be called the *slippery* religion. It is one that people must hold fast with all their might lest it should slip away from them. People who have this type of religion are constantly in fear of losing it. If they do this or that or the other thing, they

wonder, "Now, have I lost my religion?" They are always examining themselves. They are always questioning and wondering. They cannot for long settle down to certainty. They are often overwhelmed with doubts and fears. They are constantly observing their emotions to see whether or not these emotions indicate whether they still have religion or have lost it.

Perhaps they pray and earnestly try to draw near to God. Then if joy and happiness come, they are satisfied and sure they have their religion. But presently a dark day comes. Their emotions subside. Then they wonder again whether they still have their religion. In reality, their struggle is not to keep their religion but to keep their emotions and to satisfy their own questioning and doubts. This religion carries them alternately to the mountain top, then to the depths of the valley of humiliation. It is truly an "up-and-down" religion. This *slippery* sort of religion can never be the source of true and lasting happiness.

The fifth and true type of religion, the religion that corresponds with the teachings of the New Testament and with the experiences of those who have learned the inner and fuller realities of religion, is that *religion which is of the heart*. It is not a religion of restriction, neither of formalism. It is neither Sinai religion, nor a slippery religion. It is a religion in which the heart is in its natural element. It is a religion of peace and contentment, a religion of joyful service. It is the natural expression of the soul. It is a peaceful and harmonious relation with God. It is the relation of a child and its father. Its elements are simplicity, sincerity, purity, faith, love and all the fruits of the Spirit. It is a Spirit-filled life. All these things just mentioned are the deep sources that feed the bubbling springs of joy that flow forth in the waters of rejoicing and song.

In this sort of religion, God is not a great and terrible monarch, a stern judge, or task master, nor His laws a set of hard decrees. No, the Christian religion, as seen in its true light, is "good things of great joy to all people." It is written, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." With such a religion, we not only can read of the joys of salvation in the Scriptures but have the experience of them in our own souls. In this sort of Christian life, we do not fear God in the sense of being afraid of Him. We do not tremble before Him. Godly fear becomes the equivalent of reverential love, and out of divine and spiritual love flow greater joys than flow out of natural love.

Real religion has two sides—first, the inside, the relations of the soul with God. The Scripture says, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." That means to get acquainted with God; get on good terms with Him, know His good qualities and come into close contact and association with Him. To know Him thus is to be at peace with Him. We must have the real inner experience of divine life in the soul and union with Christ. This is open to everyone who will seek it in God's way.

The other side of religion is the outside. There can be a true outside religion only when there is a true inside religion. James defines the outside of religion by saying, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27. It is a pure and holy inner life, a pure and blameless outer life, devoted to service and helpfulness. This is the religion that is a well-watered land, full of springs and fruitfulness. It is a land of song and cheer and of true blessedness.

This Christian life is the life of the “new song.” When the Psalmist looked back upon the “horrible pit” and the “miry clay” out of which the Lord had delivered him he cried, “He hath put a new song in my mouth...” Psalm 40:3. The Revelator saw the great host of redeemed souls gathered before the throne of God and he said, “...I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne...” Revelation 14:2-3. In Chapter 15:3 we are told the nature of this song, “And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb...” The song of Moses was the song of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and their enemies after the crossing of the Red Sea. The song of the Lamb is the song of salvation. So the song we sing is a song of deliverance and of salvation. No wonder it is a joyful song!

The song has a special characteristic. “...No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth,” Revelation 14:3. This company of people, represented in symbol by the “hundred and forty and four thousand,” are all the redeemed of God. The song that could not be learned by others was the song that is learned only by experience, the experience of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ. It cannot be sung by mere professors of religion nor by formalists nor by legalists. It breaks forth only from the hearts of those who are happy and free in Christ.

Isaiah, foreseeing this glorious age of salvation, cried, “The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isaiah 35:10. This is the experience of those who have learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

CHAPTER V

WHO WEARS THE HALTER?

A man puts a halter upon a horse and ties him up within the narrow confines of a stall. The horse may think of the luscious grass in the pasture, but he is fast in the stall. He may think of freedom to go when he will and do what he will. He may desire freedom, but he is haltered.

A man puts a bridle upon the horse, saddles him, and rides away whither he will. The horse may desire to rest quickly under the shade of a tree. He cannot do that; he is bridled. The bridle is controlled by another will. The horse would go south, but his head is turned north by the bridle, and the way he is turned he must go. Now, the horse is much stronger than the man. If he should exert his strength and exercise his own will, he might overcome the will of the man. He might nullify the power of the halter and the bridle. Sometimes this occurs. But in general, the horse has been haltered and bridled so often that he has yielded to the mastery of these things. He does not exert his own strength or his own will as he could. All his life therefore he is mastered. He can only be a servant, very unlike his fellows in wild freedom upon the prairie.

It is not only horses who wear halters and bridles. There are men and women all about us wearing them. Circumstances halter many people and tie them up within narrow limits, restricting their freedom, shutting them off from the good things of life, making their lives narrow and often very unsatisfactory. There are other circumstances that bridle people and force them

to go whither they would not go. Many times people act against their own best judgment and against their wills. They are victims of circumstance, just as much as the horse is the victim of the halter. Their lives are just as restricted as the lives of the horses. How often we permit circumstances—our feelings, our fears, our doubts—to strap a halter upon us and lead us about whither we would not go and tie us up somewhere so that it seems we cannot get away.

Many people realize that they are haltered, but like the conquered horse, they think they are securely held by the halter. They long for freedom. They desire to be unrestricted. They want freedom of expression, freedom of action, liberty to do as they choose, to turn their lives into the channels that would yield them greater happiness and contentment. But alas, they are haltered. So they look at their halter of circumstances, of feelings, of doubts, of fears and say, "Oh, I can't help it," then cease to try to help it.

Some horses will pull back on their halters for a few times but not sufficiently to break them. Thinking they are securely fastened, the horses cease to try to get loose. We humans do the same. We make some slight efforts to overcome our circumstances and to do the things we really desire to do. We do not exert all our strength. We try only halfheartedly. Then we conclude we cannot break away and cease to try. We surrender to circumstances. We permit them to have a halter upon us through the years, and we permit them to bridle us and to ride us whither they will. Life is a bondage to circumstances.

Man was never meant to wear a halter. We are told that when man was created, God set him over the work of His hands. God made man master of things. He intended that man should always be master—master of

himself, master of his circumstances. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32. And again, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

The Christian life is a life of freedom. It is therefore a normal life. It is divinely given mastery. If we use the liberty that is given us, instead of wearing the halter of circumstances, it is our privilege to put the halter upon circumstances and to master them. God wants us to be men and women, to look circumstances straight in the face, to assert our dominion over them. The attitude of God is plainly shown in the Scriptures. Of Jesus it is said He "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;..." Revelation 1:6. But does that refer to heaven? No. Revelation 5:10 says, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

That does not mean some future reign. It is now and here, as Paul tells us in Romans 5:17: "...They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." That means we shall put the halter on our circumstances and our difficulties and master them, bringing them into subjection to our wills, asserting ourselves, thus becoming triumphant Christians.

One may say that is all very well to talk about, but how shall we do it? The answer of the Scripture is, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." With our two hands, we may put the halter on all our circumstances. These two hands are faith and determination. Faith is very good, but it is not enough. Works must go with faith. In the siege of Verdun in the World War, when attacked by a greatly superior force, taken by surprise, and at first driven back with heavy losses, the French rallied and adopted the slogan, "They shall

not pass." With grim determination and a courage that would not yield, they held on until they overcame.

Many times in our lives, we shall have to say to circumstances, "You shall not pass. You shall not master me. I will not yield to you. I will overcome you." Frequently people have tried to discourage others by saying, "You cannot do that." The answer of determination has been, "But I *will* do it." Did you ever read the poem by Edgar Guest about, "It couldn't be done—but he did it?" Right now, perhaps someone may be saying, "Yes, that is the way to do. That is the attitude to hold. I should like to do that if—" Yes, there is the *if*. What does it mean? It means I have not the courage or the will to try. Very well. Reach out your head and submit to the halter. You have your choice. You can halter the circumstances or they will halter you. We can be free men or slaves. We can spend our days haltered in the stall, ridden where we do not want to go, or we can use our strength and be free.

It is true that we cannot always change our circumstances. We need not always change them or even frequently change them to be free, to have the mastery over them and to be happy. Circumstances do not make us nor break us. It is using them or surrendering to them that determines the outcome. So many say, "But my circumstances are so unfavorable." That does not mean you need be defeated by your circumstances. It only means an opportunity for greater conquest. All real accomplishments in this world are made, *not because of circumstances, but in spite of them*. Every man who has become really great in accomplishment, or in self-mastery has done so by overcoming his obstacles and difficulties. This is the very thing that has made him great, and without these things to overcome he never would have become great; his powers would never have been developed.

It has been repeated that we should not pray for burdens equal to our strength but for strength equal to our burdens. Happiness does not come from favorable circumstances. The rich who are not compelled to work and who may do as they choose with their time are rarely happy. Shall we say, "If circumstances were more favorable, I could be happy?"

Are we sure of this? By no means. It takes more than circumstances to make anyone happy. The secret of happiness does not lie in circumstances. It lies in us. Our circumstances may be unfavorable, but that does not mean we must be unhappy. People are happy in circumstances far more unfavorable than ours. One of the happiest, most cheerful ladies whom I ever met, I called upon, in company with others, many years ago. We found her helpless in her bed. She could move her head slightly from side to side and move one hand a little. Rheumatism had made the remainder of her body almost immovable. But her face was radiant with joy. She told us how happy she was. We marveled at it. For years she had been in this condition. Still she was happy, cheerful and rejoicing. When we expressed our sympathy, she said, "I am contented." Circumstances, even such circumstances, could put no halter on her.

There are faces that shine in the darkest night with the beauty of an inner glory, with a joy that does not depend upon circumstances. Perhaps you can think of others whose circumstances are worse than yours, yet their lives seem happier than yours. Why should this be true? Why should you be less the master of your circumstances than they of theirs? Resolve that you will no longer be dominated by your feelings, your doubts, your fears, your trials or your circumstances. If you have tamely submitted to these in the past, make a declaration of independence, start a warfare to conquer

them. Be tied up no longer by them. Choose the direction of your own life. Faith and determination, by God's help, will make you master, and you shall be free indeed; and when you have gained that freedom, when you are master of your circumstances, when you have the halter on them, when you can tie them up, you will have gained that victory over life and everything in it that will start the joy-bells pealing. You will then know the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

The desire to be happy is one of the most universal of human desires. Few people put anything else ahead of their own happiness. In many a life this is the most powerful motive. Happiness, like everything else in this world of law and order, is the result of the operation of certain laws. It is a product, the result of certain processes.

One thing should be clearly noted. The road to happiness is not a direct road. If we would arrive at happiness, we must first go somewhere else. On the road thither, we must pass through the gate of *duty*, and walking on the way of right, pass through the village of *love*, descend into the vale of *humility*, go over the stony way of *loyalty* and *sincerity* and ascend to the heights of *innocence*. Here, without looking for it we shall find happiness.

It is a mistake to think that true happiness can come from mere gratification of desire. Gratification has its part, but often pursuit of a worthy motive is a greater factor. Unworthy motives, selfish desires and sensual gratifications, instead of producing happiness, produce disappoint and disillusion. It is a law of our natures that the higher the desire to be gratified or the higher the motive that we have, the higher and truer the happiness that results. No truer thing was ever said than that they that "sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." It is the inevitable consequence.

Gratification of the desires of the flesh may bring physical joy. The drunkard and the libertine may join

in singing their drinking songs, their sensual love songs and the like, but these are not songs of true happiness. A sensual joy poisons itself and dies in the midst of its song. Pure song brings higher forms of joy and higher and purer inspiration. It springs from pure and innocent love, from the home where love reigns, from the heart that is full of kindness, pity, consideration for others and love of goodness.

The highest happiness comes from the use of our highest faculties. The exercise of these faculties blossoms forth in the truest and purest joy. Joy of mind and of heart, rather than enjoyment of the flesh, inspires the heart with rejoicing. The song that has no minor strain is the song of innocence, at peace with God and with its fellow men. Selfish desire and selfish living build an impossible barrier between ourselves and true happiness. The poet spoke truly when he said,

*"Tell me not then of the pleasures that sting,
Coiled under roses of pride,
None but the holy and innocent sing,
Out of a bosom where pleasures abide."*

Innocence need not be a thing that we associate only with childhood. It may be mature. It may be a characteristic of middle age and of gray hair. Innocence is the result of right relations with God and with man. Right relations can exist only when a right attitude is maintained. A right attitude may be maintained only when back of it lies right desires and right purposes.

Happiness is the fruit of harmony. Harmony results from conformity to the laws of our being. The law of God revealed in the Bible is the law of harmony. The holy are most truly happy because they are most truly harmonious. Both their inner lives and their outer lives

are harmonious. Their relations with God and with man are harmonious. The elements of strife and warfare are absent.

Happiness is not the result of where we live or of our surroundings or of what we possess. It is the result of what we are. No matter how favorable our situation nor how much nor how many things we possess that should make us happy, if we do not have within our own breast the elements that produce happiness, we shall never be happy.

We have already noted that true happiness is associated with innocence. There is nothing from which greater happiness springs than an inner consciousness of being innocent before God. It is a singular thing that a great number of Christian teachers have taught that it is impossible for a Christian to live in innocence before God. The unhappy effects of this doctrine have been to rob the Christian life of many of its joys and to make many people look upon it as an unsatisfying life, a losing battle.

It has been taught that Christians must sin continually day by day. Believing this doctrine, it is no wonder that many Christians are unhappy and live far beneath their privileges. Their outlook is one of defeat, of constant shortcoming, of repeatedly enduring a sense of condemnation. Now, such teaching is assuredly not in harmony with the teachings of the Scriptures, particularly of the New Testament. The Christian life there is pictured to be a joyful life. The command is "Rejoice evermore." How can one rejoice evermore when he is conscious of being guilty before God? Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart." If there be no such persons, Christ's words are mockery.

What is the New Testament picture of a Christian? It is of a man or woman forgiven of their iniquities,

cleansed from their guilt, walking in righteousness before God. Or, as Paul puts it, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you." The joyful fellowship that Paul had with Christ, manifested in all his epistles, is a thing inconsistent in its entirety with the sort of life often said to be the Christian life. "But," one may say, "How about the seventh chapter of Romans?" I do not think Paul was very happy when his life corresponded to the seventh chapter of Romans. Paul passed out of the seventh chapter into the eighth chapter that day on the road to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him.

From that day there was a new song in Paul's heart and in his mouth. He lived a new life, the life pictured in the eighth chapter. The seventh chapter is not the picture of a Christian life. It is the picture of a man, without grace, trying to live up to the law of God and finding himself continually failing. It is a continuation of his argument extending from the third to the sixth chapters, of the failure of works and of the efficacy of grace. Real Christians do not live in the seventh chapter of Romans. It is not the reflection of a Christian experience.

Christians live in fellowship with God. God is their Father. They are not rebellious sons, but obedient sons. Sin is a thing of the motive and of the will. Mistakes, blunders, weaknesses, failures and unintentional shortcomings are not sins. To treat them as sins is to make a vital error. The Bible does not treat them as sins. Sin is willful disobedience. It is rebellion against God, and nothing, save things of this character may properly be called sins, or be treated as sins. These other things often called "sins" do not produce the effects of sin. The real Christian experience is a walk with God. There is

mutual understanding between the soul and God. There is earnest desire to please God and an earnest endeavor to do so.

Besides being in harmonious relations with God and our fellow men, unselfish devotion to the highest things for their own sake is the surest way to be happy. It is the tree whose fruit is happiness. It bears "twelve manner of fruits" and always has both the fragrant blossoms and the luscious fruits. The Scripture that says, "The wages of sin is death," is not a threat. It is a simple statement of an inescapable fact, now and here as well as hereafter. Evil always has its own reward, and we begin to draw its dividends the moment we are guilty of it. It never goes bankrupt. Its dividends continue to increase as the years go by. On the other hand, the dividends of righteousness are never passed. They are always paid in golden coin.

Disobedience to our best and highest impulses, aspirations and desires must inevitably result in blighted hopes, an accusing conscience, regret and a sense of failure. It is a poison injected into the cup of happiness. If we would have the song of happiness in our hearts, we must learn that the *Secret of the Singing Heart* is to be innocent, to be true to the best there is in us, to be living on a plain above the mire of sin, selfishness and sensual gratification.

CHAPTER VII

A NOXIOUS TREE

The black walnut tree has a peculiar quality that affects the soil about its roots with a poisonous substance very unfavorable to the growth of many kinds of vegetation. Grass may grow luxuriously under it, but many other things shrivel and die.

There is a something in many lives that corresponds to the black walnut tree. In its baneful influence, many of the good things of life cannot develop.

This tree is a noxious tree. It grows in the land of unbelief. It is found nowhere else. It is the worry tree. Many lives are cursed with this tree. It is one of their most prominent characteristics. It spreads its shadow over everything. It shuts out the sunlight. It poisons the soil. It draws up into itself the resources of the soul as a natural tree draws water from the soil, leaving spiritual faculties and powers parched and impoverished; it prevents their proper development and fruition.

Worry is one of the worst things that comes into a life. Perhaps only sin is worse; worry may even become sinful. It is a form of fear. Fear, worry, anxiety and foreboding are all the same in effect and will all be treated together. The worry tree does not grow in the land of faith. But in the land of unbelief and questioning, it spreads its great roots of doubt deeply into the soil. The results of worry are too numerous to be recounted in full.

One result is that, wherever worry is given place, it stops the song of joy. We cannot be glad when we worry. We cannot be free and happy. The moment we worry

over a thing, peace, joy, satisfaction and comfort all vanish. The sun goes behind a cloud. A chill wind blows upon us. There are many people who make themselves utterly wretched through worry. Its effects are not merely spiritual. The whole being is poisoned by it. Perhaps it would be well to consider some of the effects worry produces. If we know those effects, it may cause us to avoid that which produces these effects.

We note first the physical effects. There are certain glands, located in various portions of the body, that control the bodily functions. Some of these glands are excited to action by fear. They secrete a powerful substance that is poured into the bloodstream and produces immediate effects. It is this that causes one to run away from danger or to be able to expend much greater energy than at any other time. A good purpose is served by these glands, but when they are over stimulated by fear, worry, anxiety or any other emotion, they produce too great an effect upon the nerves. This tends to make one nervous, and this in turn reacts to produce fear and worry. This action and reaction continued, repeated over and over, breaks down the nerves. A great many nervous people are what they are simply because they have given way to worry. It upsets the whole course of nature. Many physical disorders are the direct result of worry. A few quotations from medical authorities may help to make this plain.

Doctor McCoy says, "The mind can have a powerful stimulating effect toward either health or disease. When the mind is properly used and controlled, health may be maintained under many adverse conditions, but when the mind is torn by conflicting, destructive emotions, it kills the very cells it is supposed to guard over and control." Again he says, "You must realize how important the mind is as a factor in the production of

many chronic disorders. Sometimes this process is so insidious as to be unrecognized except by the closest attention of a skilled diagnostician. In my practice I have seen a number of cases of paralysis which were induced by slight injury associated with fear. Although these patients had been to many different doctors and undergone many different kinds of treatments, they were not cured until this fear factor was recognized, and then the cure took place almost instantly."

Doctor Copeland, late health commissioner of New York City says, "Worry has pronounced effect upon the organisms. If your hair is inclined to be oily, you will observe that no matter how frequently you scrub it, it grows oily very quickly if you are worried." Again he says of the effect of worry, "The digestion is upset because the nerves controlling the circulation and muscular structures are 'jumpy' and disturbed in function. The intestinal action is disturbed. The brain and nervous system are upset. The glands operate irregularly. The whole system is deranged. Good teeth, as indeed good eyes and ears and heart and blood vessels and liver and kidneys, are dependent on lack of worry and plenty of restful sleep. Worry is deadly to vigor and usefulness."

A whole book of this sort of quotations could easily be selected. Dr. G. H. McIntosh says, "If men could wipe out all fear from their minds, nine tenths of them would be free from sickness." Henry Ward Beecher said, "It is not work that kills men; it is worry. Worry is rust upon the blade."

The mental effect of worry and fear is equally as great as the physical effect. Through worry, people often work themselves up into a sort of mental fever so that their nerves "go to pieces." When we worry, the mind cannot think clearly. The judgment is impaired.

Things look out of proportion. They do not seem natural, but appear altogether different than they do when the mind is in a normal condition. Sometimes worry produces great mental distress. Sometimes it partly or entirely unfits one for work. Have you not heard people say, "I am so upset I just cannot do anything."

This mental condition reacts upon the body; the physical effects of worry react upon the mind; and we have a vicious set of actions and reactions set up, destructive alike to mind and body. An agitated state of mind affects the brain tissues. The poisons created in the body through fear and worry react upon the brain tissues, and the mind becomes still more troubled. These things are not imaginary. They are being suffered by thousands of individuals. People get up in the morning tired out. They have no energy. They have to drive themselves. This is one common effect of worry. Another common result of worry is lack of mental control so that the mind cannot be concentrated on anything.

Worry also has a spiritual effect. It destroys faith. In fact, faith and worry are mutually destructive. Faith will destroy worry and worry will destroy faith. So, whichever is given ascendancy will destroy the other. Worry stimulates doubts. The more we worry, the more we doubt. We have heard people talk about blind faith. Faith is not nearly so blind as doubt. Doubt cannot see favorable things. It sees everything in an unfavorable light and magnifies it. There may be ever so many favorable elements in a situation, but doubt sees none of them. Worry sees none of them. Worry brings gloom and discouragement. It makes one moody, forgetful of God's goodness and mercy and helpfulness. In fact, worry shuts God out of the picture. It causes us to forget Him or makes us doubt Him, doubt ourselves and

doubt others. Under the influence of worry we can draw the most gloomy mental pictures. We clothe everything in somber tints.

Worry also leads to self-condemnation. It makes us minimize the good there is in us and the good there is in life. It prevents us from exercising our powers. With worry there is a great troop of evils. They cluster around it and add to its damaging influence. Worry is always evil. It never serves any good purpose. It never aids us in accomplishing anything. It never makes anything easier. It has nothing to recommend it.

More than that, *worry is never necessary*. Mark well that statement. It is a positive truth. Worry is *never* necessary. First, because it never can help us. It can never make things easier or better. It never did any good. It never cured any trouble. Second, we do not have to worry. There is always a better way. We shall attempt to point out that way later.

Worry is altogether folly. It not merely does no good—it always makes things worse. It weakens every good thing. It strengthens every bad thing. Worry is a noxious tree. It bears poisonous fruits. Reader, have you one of these poisonous worry trees? You must rid yourself of it before you can sing the glad songs of rejoicing that come from a free soul. One of the secrets of the singing heart is the remedy for worry.

CHAPTER VIII

FRUITS OF THE WORRY TREE

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature." Everything has some method of protection. Even the plants have "defense mechanisms." Animals have shells, teeth, sharp claws and are swift of foot or wing. Some of them produce noxious odors. Some of them are unpleasant to the taste. The octopus secretes an inky fluid with which to color the water. Some animals have great skill in hiding themselves. Some have electric defenses. Some are covered with spines.

Man has a natural instinct of self-preservation. He will run or fight or secrete himself or use other methods of defense. This law of defense is manifest in man's physical contact with nature. This is known too well to need explanation. He has also various mental defense mechanisms. Likewise, in spiritual things he seeks to protect himself.

These various defense mechanisms have a powerful effect upon our conduct. When we are brought into a trial, threatened by something that will hurt or annoy us or when we fear something, our defense mechanisms begin at once to function. The first impulse is to run away, to escape from the trouble. We shrink from what hurts. We try to avoid trials and all hard or unpleasant things.

It is often the part of wisdom to avoid, as far as we can without sacrificing something vital, the unpleasant things of life. But if we give way too much to this disposition to shrink from things and to run away from them, it leads to cowardice. We lose strength of charac-

ter, courage and the qualities that win in life. A coward can never feel self-respect, and if we are spiritual cowards we shall be lacking in manhood and womanhood. We cannot respect cowardice even when it is in ourselves.

This disposition to escape unpleasantness often leads to an unfair excusing of ourselves in things in which we have been at fault. It often leads to our putting the wrong face on things, exaggeration, minimizing the facts, and even to plain lying. These are the natural fruits of fear and worry, but they undermine spiritual character. They take the joy out of life. We need to watch our defense mechanisms and be sure that we use right methods of defense—methods that build up the character rather than tearing it down, methods that increase courage, faith and determination. We should conquer the instinctive cowardice of our natures. “Safety first” may be a good slogan sometimes, but safety through the measure mentioned is not real safety. It is only exchanging one kind of danger for another.

Another defense mechanism is the tendency to resistance. When we adopt proper measures of resistance, the results will probably be good. We are likely to be strengthened, encouraged and helped. It is likely to bring out the best there is in us. But sometimes this instinct of resistance manifests itself in murmuring and complaining against circumstances or against people, blaming others for our plights or our troubles—shifting responsibility. These may become chronic faultfinding and result in such a critical attitude that we are hard to please, contentious, and ill-tempered. We may become disposed to become impatient and find it hard to practice self-control. We may have a sense of resentment against others and become unkind and uncharitable in our attitude.

Not only those who are not Christians have trouble along these lines, but many Christians are tempted in this way. They worry and fear. They become discouraged and then the characteristics mentioned begin to manifest themselves in them. They have a fight to overcome them. They wonder why they are impatient, why it is hard to be kind, why they have a feeling of resentment against things.

We need not be surprised at this. It is only a defense mechanism. It is Nature trying to escape from this highly unpleasant situation. So, reader, you need not be surprised if you have a conflict with these things when you are worrying and when you have given way to discouragement. To get rid of these things, get rid of your worry, your fear and your discouragement. Then these other things will naturally disappear. But if you are given to worry, do not expect to escape wholly from these things. Indeed you are likely to have much trouble with them. These are not necessarily the result of sin. They are the result of worry and fear. They come from a wrong attitude of mind, a wrong outlook on things, a wrong way of trying to overcome difficulties.

In such a situation the outlook is negative. We need to change to a positive attitude. We need to put faith in the place of doubts. Trust instead of worry. Look on the bright side instead of the dark side.

A negative attitude destroys faith and robs courage of its strength, so we can bear little. It covers the bright picture of hope with sackcloth. It banishes peace. Instead of soul rest, we have turmoil and trouble. It robs us of balance and poise. Confidence fades away. It gives place to distrust. We lose our power of initiative. In fact, worry and fear rob us of all the choice blessings we might possess. They prevent us from using our powers and make us pigmies instead of giants.

The triumphant life results from courageous action, and this courageous action is always based on faith. It has a hopeful outlook. It faces the future with confidence. This is the normal attitude of the Christian. But worry causes heaviness, discouragement, dissatisfaction, despondency and perhaps despair. Long giving way to worry will change the character. The blithe gaiety of childhood, the courageous strength of manhood, the joyful song of victory gives way to moroseness and gloom. Clouds cover the sky, and we forget there are anywhere the glorious beams of sunshine. We ruin our influence with others. They feel more like shunning us than being in our society. It shackles our hands. It robs life of what is most worthwhile. If we will have a worry tree or a number of them, we must expect they will bear this sort of fruit.

Worry also has another extremely bad result. It dishonors God. We say God is our Father, that He is taking care of us. We say we have faith in Him. We say we believe God is faithful. Then we act in a way altogether contrary to this. If God is our God, and if He is taking care of us, if we are safe in His care, if no evil can come to us without His permission, then what are we worrying about? If God really is what He says He is and what we believe He is, we have no reason to worry. Things are bound to come out all right. God will find some way to bring us through to victory. He will protect us against those things that would injure us. If He is true, our fears are ungrounded, our worry is all for nothing. If we really believe God is true and that He is true to us, there is not a reason under heaven for us to spend one moment worrying.

Again, worry dishonors God's Word. He has made definite promises. These promises are true, or they are not true. If they are *not* true, then we may have cause

for worry. But if they *are* true, let us act like it. Do we actually believe God's Word? If so, when we are tempted to worry, let us sit down, take that Word, and read its promises. Then let us believe them and act as though we believe them. When we do this, there can be no room for worry.

Worry ignores the help God has given us in the past and the victories we have won through His grace, also those victories we have won through our own strength. When we are tempted to worry, we should sit down and look over the past and see how many things came out better than we expected they would. We should observe how God has helped us in the past and say with one of old, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It will do us great good, when we are tempted to worry, to recount our past victories; to look back and see that our past worries were all for naught. When did worrying help anything in your past life? When did worrying keep anything from coming upon you that otherwise would have come? When did worry shield you from any trouble? Get rid of your worry tree. Get out from under its shadow. Get into God's sunshine. If you will do this, it will not be long until the song of victory flows forth from your lips and peace and courage and hope spring up anew in your heart.

CHAPTER IX

FERTILIZING THE WORRY TREE

Some people are not satisfied to have a worry tree and to permit it to grow as it will. They fertilize it and water it. Oh, no, they do not mean to do this! Nevertheless they do it. They would like to be rid of their worries. Very often they worry over their worries. I once knew a woman who was so given to worry that when everything was going well and she could find nothing to worry about she would worry because she thought things were going too well and would certainly bring trouble. Nor is she the only person of this sort I have seen.

But how do we fertilize the worry tree? There are many ways. Some of them we shall recount.

First, we increase our worries by failure to face the facts calmly. We are like some horses. We become frightened at some things which have in them nothing that ought to frighten us. When we come to realize, this we are sometimes quite ashamed of ourselves. When there is a threatening or unpleasant prospect before us, and we are tempted to worry over it, we should not allow ourselves to become excited or agitated. We can meet things in calmness better than we can when agitated; when we are masters of ourselves better than when we are the prey of our fears.

We should face the facts—all the facts. We should not merely take note of the ones that oppress our feelings most. Our tendency naturally is to look at the worst side and to be impressed by the most threatening things and to overlook the favorable elements. We are influenced by our feelings more than by sound judgment

and by our fears more than by our courage. Troubles often look much worse than they are. In fact, we can usually bear them better than we suppose we can, but we are naturally disposed to take one look at things, then fear the worst. One of old said, "I feared a fear and it came upon me." Why did his fear come upon him? Because fear made him adopt an attitude that opened a way for its coming. He threw down his shield of faith. He began to tremble and shrink. If he had resolutely faced his fear, it probably would never have come upon him.

Failure to give weight to the facts we know will fertilize the worry tree. Very often we know that we can meet things if we will. We know there are certain favorable aspects we should consider. But instead of giving attention to these, we look entirely to the unfavorable things. We forget the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God. We are like a soldier who told an experience he had in our Civil War. One day he was riding out with a comrade when suddenly they came face to face with two of the enemy. There was a lively exchange of shots. In the end, one of the enemy lay dead upon the ground while the other was severely wounded. Upon returning to camp this man examined his revolver. To his surprise not a shot had been fired. His companion had done all the shooting that had overcome their enemies. He had sat on his horse like a statue, forgetting all about his part. I fear all too many of us when we face a conflict forget our weapons and the ability we have to use them, and instead of fighting we worry and worry.

Another mistake we make is giving way to our feelings rather than controlling them. Our emotions are easily stirred, whether they be joyful emotions or the opposite. Very often bad feelings assert themselves—

fear, doubts, timidity, foreboding. We give place to them. We let them run riot. We fall into a panic. We should take command of our feelings. We should master them. Our action should be a response to good judgment instead of to our emotions. Many people are tormented by foreboding of evils to come and these faculties. This need not be, if we will control ourselves and make the intellect, rather than the emotions, the captain of our soul.

We fertilize the worry tree by exaggerating the possibilities of evil and by not considering the probabilities of good. When we are threatened with some evil, let us ask ourselves the question, "Will this thing necessarily turn out evil? Will it necessarily prove to be what it looks as though it might be? Will the results assuredly be what they promise to be?" Let us look at the factors that may balance these possibilities. Let us give due weight to the possibilities on the other hand. Let us ask ourselves whether we are not adding to the real dangers by our imagination. Let us see if we are not magnifying the chances of things going wrong. Strip things of the seeming, and get down to the reality. They will usually be found to be much less dangerous than they appear to be, and we shall see that there is little, if any, cause to fear them.

A fertile source of trouble is self-pity. I know of nothing that can torture a soul more than self-pity, and this self-pity has in it an element of cowardice. We say, "Oh, it is too bad that I must suffer so. It is too bad that I must have such trouble. How unfortunate I am. How many things I have to endure. Why cannot I get along as do others? Why cannot I have an easy time as have they? Why must my way be so rough? Why must I meet so many difficulties? Oh, my poor self! What will I do?" If one wants to make himself thoroughly unhappy, let

him adopt such a course. It matters not whether there is anything really calculated to produce unhappiness. This of itself is sufficient. Get rid of self-pity if you want to be happy, for you never will be happy while you have it except with that poor sort of satisfaction which comes through self-pity.

A twin sister to self-pity is a disposition to seek the sympathy of others and to enjoy telling our troubles, magnifying them in a way to excite sympathy. These things shrivel up the soul.

We often increase our fears and troubles by telling them to others. The more we think of them and the more we tell them, the deeper the impression made upon our own mind by them.

A further source of trouble is questioning the loyalty of others to us or their interest in us and sympathy for us. Do not expect other people to worry because you worry, or to fear because you fear. Friends are usually as loyal as we deserve them to be. They usually have as much interest in us as we merit by our conduct and attitude. They usually have enough sympathy for us when we actually need it. We should not expect them to have sympathy for us when we are acting in a way that tends to disgust them. If we show ourselves real soldiers and meet things with courageous, hopeful, forward-looking faith, and then things go ill with us, we may expect ready sympathy. If we show ourselves cowards, if we whine and sniffle, to bestow sympathy upon us would be to waste it. If we expect others to be loyal to us, we must be loyal to ourselves. If we expect them to have an interest in us, we must act in a way to arouse their interest.

And finally, we fertilize the worry tree by questioning God's faithfulness and love and mercy and His every act of care.

Have you been fertilizing your worry tree? If so, you have only yourself to blame if it spreads itself over all your dwelling and if it sighs day and night in the mournful breeze, like the somber moaning of the pine.

CHAPTER X

DESTROYING THE WORRY TREE

The vigor and tenacity of life in a tree is determined largely by the soil in which it grows. I lived for many years in a state where the soil is fertile, the ground level and where beech trees were very numerous. I had occasion to girdle many of them and observed that they were very easily killed. Previously to this time, I had lived in another state where the soil is clay and the country very hilly. Here the beech trees were very hard to kill.

I remember a neighbor killing a tree that stood by the roadside. He not only girdled it, but the boys climbed the tree and cut off the branches a little distance from the trunk. These were then piled around the tree and burned. I wondered why they were taking such radical steps to kill the tree. The next spring I learned their reason. In spite of all of this treatment, the stubs of the branches that had been cut off threw out new branches and leafed out. The roots sprouted up, and with all their labor, they had not accomplished their purpose. The difference was not in the climate; it must have been in the soil.

We have already pointed out that the "worry tree" grows in the soil of doubt. We can hold an attitude that is favorable to worry, fear and other things that have unpleasant consequences. On the other hand we can hold an attitude of faith that is altogether unfavorable toward these things. In order to destroy the "worry tree," we should change the soil about its roots. We cannot uproot it and destroy it by an act of our will. We can

take away its favorable soil. We can develop faith. We can believe in God and in ourselves. We can turn our eyes away from our worries and our troubles and look upon God. We can cease to fertilize the "worry tree." We can cease to rob ourselves of our heritage of victory willed to us by our heavenly Father.

We can have that rest of soul God has promised us. We can find it only in Him. But as long as we permit all our time to be occupied with giving attention to our worries, we shall have no time to give to the cultivation of those other things that God would freely develop in us that would give us happiness and contentment. We so often cultivate doubts instead of cultivating faith. It is important that we learn how we are doing this, and then adopt a different course. We can all have faith if we will go about it right, and faith is the victory that overcometh all of our troubles. One of the best ways to get rid of worries is to ignore the doubts upon which they are founded. Troubles left alone have a way of curing themselves. As long as we fill our brain with worry, we increase our trouble. The less we think about our troubles, the smaller they become. The more we think about them, the more rapidly they grow, and the less capable we are of overcoming them or meeting them successfully.

The surest way to get rid of the "worry tree" is to cut it down with the ax of faith. There is no worry or fear in trust. If I repeat this thought over and over, it may sink deep into your heart and mind, and that is what you need. When you worry, you do not trust. When you trust you, do not worry. You cannot do both these at one time.

Permit me to suggest a way to develop your faith. Take your Bible and some paper. Write out a list of promises, promises that meet your need. Read these promises over every day. Read them until they become

real to you. Whenever you catch yourself worrying or fearing, get those promises and read them. Say after you read each one, "This is true, and it means me." Say this over and over until you come to believe it. Perhaps at first your words will mock you. Perhaps the promises will seem to mock you. I have had the experience. I know how it feels. I know, too, from personal experience that one can keep right at it, reading these promises, asserting that they are true, asserting that they mean us, until in our own consciousness they *do* come to mean us. They come to soothe and comfort us. They neutralize our fears. Little by little, we come to trust in them, and as we trust we cease to worry. Our fears grow less. We come into a restful attitude. There is a sure cure for all of our worries if we take it. That cure is an attitude of simple trust in God and His promises.

Worry is a mental habit. Children do not worry, or if they do, it is only momentarily. There is a natural flexibility to the human mind that throws off worry, until we rob it of its flexibility by cultivating the habit of worrying. Any habit can be broken, so the worry habit can be broken. If you are troubled with worry, start in to break yourself of it just as you would break yourself of any other improper or hurtful habit. Worrying is an extremely hurtful habit. It is an abnormal mental state possible of correction, and we owe it to ourselves to correct it.

We cannot help thoughts coming into our minds, but it is within our power to direct our thoughts. We can repress some of our thoughts. We can compel ourselves to quit thinking along some lines. It is usually easier to supplant improper thoughts with other brighter, more cheerful thoughts. From a long experience of suffering, confined to my bed, with nothing to do, being in fact unable to do anything, and having

gone to the depths of discouragement, after facing black despair for months, I learned the lesson of supplanting these with better thoughts. I found that I must keep my thoughts off myself; so I deliberately turned my thoughts into other channels. Of course the old gloomy thoughts reasserted themselves, but as often as they came back I supplanted them with something else, and finally broke myself completely of the habit of worrying and of thinking depressing thoughts.

One thing very needful is the will not to worry. The power of suggestion has a profound effect upon us. Our thoughts have this power of suggestion. We can suggest negative things to our mind, or we can suggest positive things. We can suggest discouraging things, or we can suggest encouraging things. We can make our minds run in the channel in which we choose for them to run. Positive suggestion is the basis of a happy and successful life. Make your thoughts help you, rather than hinder you.

One trouble with many people is that they are always resisting something. They are always on the defensive. This attitude of resistance toward our circumstances and surroundings places us under a continuous strain. One writer has said, "Most nervous patients are in a constant state of muscular contraction; but a large percentage of the things that harass and vex them, causing them nervous tenseness, would cease to torture them if they would simply stop resisting. It is our perpetual resistance to annoying trifles that gives them power to annoy us."

I do not advocate surrender to circumstances. What we need is to adjust ourselves to them. This constant revolt against circumstances so common in many people, takes the joy out of their lives. It keeps them under a perpetual strain. It uses up their energy to no

purpose. Do not use up your energy resisting things. Displace the undesirable thing by something else if that is possible. If not, adjust yourself to it, make the best of it. Let us use in these things as great intelligence as we do in other things. When I am cold, I do not resist the cold; I seek warmth. When I am hungry, I do not resist hunger; I seek food. When I am weary, I rest. When I am anxious or worried, I turn to faith and trust. The Psalmist said, "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." He had learned the secret of overcoming trouble.

The word "worry" is not in the Bible. You may look for it from cover to cover. You will not find it. Since God did not see fit or think it necessary to use the word "worry" in the Bible or have it used; just so, it need not be in the Christian life. To be sure, the equivalent is in the Bible. We find fear, trouble and words of like nature, but we are commanded not to be afraid, not to be troubled.

Many people are like those of whom the Psalmist speaks. They are "...in great fear, where no fear was..." Psalm 53:5. The margin says, "They feared a fear where no fear was." Most of our troubles are imaginary, or if there is real trouble, we add much to it through our imagination and fear. Some people are so afraid of trouble that they are never at rest. They are frightened at nothing; even as it is written, "...The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them..." Leviticus 26:36.

Listen to this promise: "Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Proverbs 1:33. Here is the promise that God made for us through Abraham, "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,...all the days of our life." Luke 1:74-75.

The experience of the Psalmist may be our experience if we will do as he did: "I sought the LORD, and he

heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4. We shall also do well to hold an attitude like that which David held. He said, "...The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1. The result of holding that attitude is stated in verse three, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Read also Psalm 46:1-2, "...God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Again, "...In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." Psalm 56:4. The exhortation of Christ is, "Be not anxious." Matthew 6:25. (American Standard Version.) Read also verses 31, 34; Luke 12:25-26.

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled..." John 14:1. What reason does He give that we should not be troubled? He continues, "Ye believe in God." To Him, that was sufficient reason for not worrying. It ought to be sufficient reason to us. In verse 27, He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you...Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Now, for a concluding thought which we shall do well to keep fresh in our minds. When we trust in and obey God, whatever comes to us must come in His will. It must come by His permission. It cannot come without His knowledge. His watchful care is ever over us. He will always keep us no matter how many troubles come. Therefore if we abide in Him and His Word abide in us, we shall never have cause to worry. We are safe and secure no matter how threatening future or present troubles may be. So cut down your worry tree with the ax of faith, and rest in full assurance of faith in the righteousness and love of God.

CHAPTER XI

RINGING THE JOY BELLS

Each of us has a large capacity for enjoyment. Some are naturally more exuberant than others. Some are lighthearted and cheerful. Others are sober and thoughtful. Some are emotional. Some are unemotional. Some are inclined to look on the bright side of things; others upon the dark side. But each of us has within joy bells which may be made to peal out the glad tidings of a joyful heart.

Sometimes these joy bells ring spontaneously, but very often if they ring we must ring them. We must do something to cause them to ring. Every life may hear their happy echoes, every life may be joyous. If our life does not hold a considerable content of joy, it is because we permit it to become abnormal. We permit things to silence the joy bells, and we permit them to hang silent in the belfries of our souls.

Like all our other capacities, our capacity for joy and gladness may be developed and increased. It is important to have the will to be joyful. "I mean to be happy" should be the motto of each of us. There need be nothing selfish in such an attitude. It is perfectly right and in complete harmony with God's will that we hold such an attitude and that we use our best endeavors to make it a reality in our lives.

The Christian religion is not a long-faced, gloomy thing. It is the greatest source of true happiness. We should set ourselves to the task of developing our capacity to be happy. We should not be like a woman who once lived neighbor to my grandfather. She constantly

wore a sunbonnet that extended some inches before her face. Asked why she did it, she said she wore it lest she should see something to make her laugh. A part of her idea of being a Christian was refraining from laughter. Others, while not so extreme, think it a mark of spirituality to be grave and dignified and to shut out of life the things that would make it bright, cheerful and happy.

Long ago I determined to be happy. I determined to be happy no matter what happened and no matter what condition I might be in nor what my circumstances might be. For twenty-one years I have kept my bed, a constant sufferer, but I am happy. I am happy every day. I will not be any other way. I have had my troubles, many of them. I shall probably have more. I have learned that troubles do not make unhappiness. It is only a wrong attitude toward trouble that does so. I hope the reader will pardon my referring to my own experience, but I have passed through so many things and so much suffering and trouble and yet have learned to be happy in spite of it that I know others can do the same if they will. Many a time I have had to pull hard on the rope of the joy bells to get them to ring. I have kept on pulling until they pealed out their joyous tones. Dear reader, you can do the same, no matter what the situation or surroundings, if you will go about it in the right way.

Many people have unfavorable tendencies. They seem naturally disposed to be easily discouraged or gloomy, looking on the dark side. They are timid, sensitive or unsociable. These unfavorable natural tendencies should not be permitted to have sway in the life. We should set ourselves resolutely to overcome such tendencies. If we are inclined to become easily discouraged, we should cultivate hope. We should ask ourselves, "What would be the hopeful attitude with regard to this?" Having determined what it would be, we

should adopt it and hold it, no matter what the temptation is to do otherwise.

If we are inclined to be gloomy and to look on the dark side of things, let us compel ourselves to look on the bright side. Perhaps we may feel there is no bright side, but there is always a bright side to everything. If there is no naturally bright side, let us turn it up toward God and let the sunshine of His love fall upon it. That will brighten any circumstance. If we are inclined to be timid, let us compel ourselves to do the thing we ought to do or want to do. Let us not surrender to our timidity. We can break through it and overcome it and master it. If we give way to it, its hold upon us becomes firmer and firmer. If we do what we desire to do in spite of it, it will cease to hinder us.

If we are inclined to be unsociable, we should compel ourselves to act in a sociable way whether we feel like it or not. We should practice being friendly toward others. We should meet them halfway or beyond. If we act this out it will soon become natural to us and bring us much satisfaction.

I have spoken of the rope of the joy bells. Most bells do not ring of themselves. We must ring them. So we must ring the joy bells. Sometimes our joy bells seem like the old bell on a farm where I once was. It stood on a tall pole. I wondered why it was not rung to call the workers in from the field at noon. When I came to the house, I discovered there was no rope attached to the bell.

In some cases, the joy bells are like a bell on another farm where I lived. It did not hang in the proper position because it was not properly balanced. So when the wind would blow, the bell would ring night or day. Many a time I was awakened in the night by its ringing. Some joy bells likewise ring only as chance occurrences.

They ring only under favorable conditions, as a result of favorable circumstances. They are not controlled. We need to attach a rope of faith to our joy bells, and through the exercise of this faith we can cause them to ring. We can have an inner source of joy and peace that is not disturbed by the storms of life, that does not depend upon circumstances but has its root and fountain deep in the heart. We can be so hid away with Christ in God that the storms will pass us by.

A number of years ago, during the test of a submarine, it stayed submerged for many hours. When it had returned to the harbor, a man said to the commander, "Well, how did the storm affect you last night?" The commander looked at him in surprise and said, "Storm! We knew nothing of any storm!" They had been down far enough below the surface not to feel any effect of the storm. We can sink down into God from life's storms so they need not keep the joy bells of our soul from ringing. We can be joyful even in the midst of trouble.

A friend once told me of his experience in an earthquake in a certain city. He said when the buildings swayed and trembled, all the bells of the city began ringing. In life's earthquakes we may so trust God that our joy bells will ring.

God gives to us the gift of rejoicing. Jesus said He gave us His peace, "That your joy may be full." Paul rejoiced in the midst of his tribulations, "We are exceeding joyful in all our tribulations." And he exhorted the Thessalonians to "rejoice evermore." If we cannot rejoice in the things of the present, in the realization of our hopes, we can at least rejoice in hope of better things to come. Rejoicing in past victories and in past blessings will often bring joy, in spite of present trouble.

There may be periods in life that are dark. Failure may cast its shadows upon us. Discouragements may

press us. If we look only at the present we shall have a hard time to make the joy bells ring. At such times we should look at our lives as a whole, not at these temporary incidents. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." There is a morning which shall dawn upon our darkest night. If we cannot rejoice in ourselves in the present, we can rejoice in God. We can rejoice in the good things of the past and in the good things that lie before us in the future.

The truly and permanently happy people are those who have a source of happiness too deep, or too high, to be seriously disturbed by ordinary troubles. There is a spiritual balance which we can attain that gives us stability and makes us like the anchored buoy, rather than like the drifting object which is ever tossed about by the waves of circumstances. Faith is the anchor of the soul. In fact, faith is the greatest element in the life of happiness and success. Those who have this inner source of happiness do not depend upon daily events to make them happy. They depend upon what they are, upon their relations with God—those permanent characteristics of life that settle them, root and ground them in Christ and in the Christian life. The waves of trouble may pass over them, but they are not swept from their place.

Jesus taught us a valuable lesson when He said, "I have meat that ye know not of." We may know what this means from personal experience. We may be so submitted to God, so obedient to Him, and so trust in Him that the joy bells may be kept ringing in our lives and our souls be rejoicing evermore until we reach that land of endless day where trouble and sorrow, discouragements and suffering never come. Learn, dear reader, the blessed lesson of how to ring your joy bells and how to prevent them from being muffled by doubts and fears.

CHAPTER XII

JUST FOR TODAY

There are three days—yesterday, today and tomorrow. The population of the world is divided between these three days. Some are living in the present, some in the past and some in the future. Where we are living, with respect to time, has a great influence upon our lives. Perhaps we do not know just where we are living. It might pay us to make a careful examination of our lives and see whether the past, the present, or the future is bulking most largely in our life.

Those who are living in yesterday are living on memories. Yesterday is gone forever. We can never recall it. I once knew a home where the wife had died. I visited it a year or so after her death. It was a gloomy place. The husband was a gloomy man. He had tried to leave everything in the home as nearly as possible as his wife had left it. The musical instrument had been untouched. This man was living in the past. All the brightness, joy, love and happiness came from the past. The present meant nothing to him. The future held no hope. On the journey of life he was walking backward. His gaze was ever behind him.

There are many like this man. Their circumstances may be different, but they are facing the past. Their joys are the memory of past joys. The sorrow of past troubles, mistreatments, losses, failures and sins shroud their lives in gloom. Why should we keep these things ever present with us? Bring not the care of the past, its regrets, sorrows, or anything from it that can

cast a gloom upon our today, into the lives we are now living. Yesterday is only a memory. Let us carefully cover its scars. Let us not exhibit them to the world. Let us not be ever looking upon them and thinking over them. Paul's example is a good one to follow, "Forgetting that which is behind I press forward." We should let yesterday be yesterday. Someone has said, "The tears of yesterday are like passing showers." After the shower should come sunshine. After yesterday's troubles should come forgetting. Yesterday's joys should be succeeded by the joys of today. Let us not live in yesterday. Today is too full of opportunity. It is heavily laden with good things. Let us dry the tears of yesterday. Let us turn to today.

There are other people who live in tomorrow. Their joys are the joys of anticipation, not of realization. True, anticipation has its real joys, but we should not picture a tomorrow so bright that it obscures today. We should not exalt tomorrow so much that today loses its meaning. The hopes of tomorrow, the bright pictures we paint, are not reality. We know not whether they ever shall be. Sometimes people cannot enjoy the things of today because of their forebodings for tomorrow. Instead of filling the future with bright anticipations, they fill it with a thousand ghostly fears. They cross their bridges before they get to them and because they are ever looking at the bridges their imagination pictures before them, they cannot see the beauties beside the roadway they are traveling.

For them, the flowers beside them bloom in vain. The songs of the birds are not heard. The beautiful prospects on each side of their way are lost. The bridge ahead is what they see. Their attention is so focused on it that they have no eyes or ears for today. A writer said, "I am the champion bridge crosser. I not only cross them, but I help build them." He has many relatives today

scattered all over the world. They are in the same business. The fears of tomorrow are a blight on many lives.

Jesus, who understood life better than anyone else, said, "Take therefore no thought for tomorrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." His meaning is—do not live in tomorrow, do not borrow trouble. Live tomorrow when you get to it. Live in to-day. We know not what tomorrow shall bring forth. When it comes, it will take thought for itself. There will be time enough to meet its problems, to overcome its difficulties, to fight its battles and to rejoice in its victories, when we have reached it. Let us not neglect today for tomorrow.

Whittier says,

*"No longer forward or behind
I look in hope or fear,
But grateful take the good I find—
The best of now and here."*

Our lives are wholly made of todays. Let us live in the time that is ours; make the best of it while we may. Let us enjoy its joys and do its work. Let us live to the full today, giving to the past and to the future only what is justly theirs and only what will profit us in the giving.

It is important that we properly meet the things that come. Someone has said, "Tomorrow we shall smile over today's worries; so why not begin toady?" This is an excellent philosophy and well worth consideration. If adopted, it will be a profitable rule of life for us.

If we were given now the strength and grace we shall need tomorrow, we could not use it. It would profit us nothing. If we are strong enough for today, tomorrow need give us no concern. We shall be strong enough for it when it comes. Sufficient for today is God's way of

giving. Suppose you try using today the strength and grace you had yesterday. Does it avail you anything? Then do not look for tomorrow's grace today, for if you had it today, you could not use it either tomorrow or today.

We should not attempt to solve all the future's problems now nor to see our way entirely clear before us. Face the things that are right at hand. Sometimes the difficulties of today have a way of projecting themselves into the future so that when we look forward to it we feel we never can bear it.

Perhaps a little more of my own experience may be helpful to others. When I was forced to take my bed, my sufferings were very great. These continued month after month. After several months, I was one day lying thinking. The future began to loom up before me so dark, so discouraging, so hopeless, that I felt I never could face it. I asked myself, "How can I endure it?" I was appalled by the prospect. While I was in this melancholy state, it seemed the Spirit of God drew near and whispered to me, "You do not have to live tomorrow now. You do not need to bear tomorrow's pain or suffering now. God knows what you can bear. He will not let more come upon you than you can bear. But live today, not the days that are before you."

I said within myself, "Yes, God knows what I can bear. He will not let that come which is too great for me. I will live today. I can bear this today. I will not think of tomorrow." And so again and again I said to myself, "I can bear it today." This attitude was a great help to me, and the sense of God watching over my life became much more real.

Yes, dear soul, you can bear it today. Whatever your trouble, whatever your sorrow, whatever your perplexity, you will find a way of getting through today. When tomorrow comes, there will be a way for tomorrow. Not

long ago I was reading the hymn, "Lead Kindly Light." I was very deeply impressed by some things contained in it. The author says, "I do not ask to see the distant scenes: One step enough for me." He had come to live in today. But was this a natural characteristic? By no means. He continues,

*"I was not ever thus—
I loved to choose and see my path."*

How human he was. How like the rest of us! But he learned sufficiently the wisdom of living in today, until he could say, "one step enough for me." In confidence he closes:

*"So long thy power hath blessed me,
Sure it still will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, O'er crag and torrent till
The night is gone."*

Today has enough for us to bear, enough for us to conquer, enough work for us to do. But we shall be sufficient for it. Many of our troubles of today will pass with today. We need not carry them into the future. We can meet our troubles of today as Abraham Lincoln met his. "Lincoln, even when assailed by such anxieties and griefs as you never will know, used to say, 'And this too will pass.'"

Yes, today will pass and tomorrow will come, and when tomorrow comes we shall have tomorrow's strength for its needs. Let us live today in the strength that God gives and not permit the shadows of yesterday nor forebodings of tomorrow to hide the sunshine and beauty and gladness that come from trust and obedience in today.

CHAPTER XIII

TROUBLES THAT MISSED THE TRAIN

*"Some of your griefs you have cured,
And the sharpest you still have survived;
But what torments of pain you endured
From the evils that never arrived."*

Professor Meyer, of Stanford University, says, "It is our fears that often bring us our worst perplexities." The things that happen to us are usually not nearly so bad as the things we expect to happen—that do not happen.

Review your life, and count how many troubles you foresaw and feared, whose dark shadow lay across your way, possibly for years. Many of these troubles never arrived. They missed their train somewhere. They failed to make connection, or they were run off in some other direction. Anyway, the trouble you looked for and planned for and expected and feared and shrank from never came your way.

Many other troubles that looked so great in prospect, when you actually faced them, when they were close enough to touch, were not at all the terrible things you thought them to be. Some of them you surmounted easily. Some of them you laughed at. Some of them you made stepping stones. Some of them just faded out of the picture.

Did you ever read the old story of the servant girl whom her mistress found one day in the kitchen weeping? Her mistress said, "Why, Mary, what are you crying about?" "Oh," she wailed, "I am afraid my children

will be drowned." "Why," said her mistress, "you are not even married." "No," said she, "but I was thinking how awful it would be if I should marry and have children and they should fall in the river and be drowned."

We smile at this tale, but many of us are just as foolish as this servant girl. Never go out into the future to meet your troubles. If they are coming, they will come anyway. They will get to you soon enough. Do not run to meet them. Just let them alone, and most of them will go some other way. In one way or another, they will miss the train and never reach you.

Many people are like Martha. They are "careful and troubled about many things." Not a few people are like Nebuchadnezzar. He said, "I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me." Daniel 4:5. Daniel also said, "...The visions of my head troubled me." Daniel 7:15. Many people have written me about dreams they have, had asking me to interpret them or to tell them if I think they portend trouble.

There are hundreds of people who are disturbed by things they dream or by experiences they have just as they wake from sleep. They have impressions of various sorts. Some of them are very unusual. Some people are troubled for years over something they have dreamed. It is true that we read in the Bible of people having dreams that had significance. These dreams, however, were very unusual. Perhaps a man would have two or three such dreams in a lifetime. All the rest of his dreams were without significance. If God should give any of us a dream, He would see that we learned its meaning. He would not leave us to be troubled over it very long.

Never worry over your dreams. Never interpret them as meaning trouble coming to you unless you go farther and believe it is God's way of helping you out of

the trouble by forewarning you and thus enabling you to be prepared to meet it when it comes. But God never gives you a dream to frighten you unless to awaken you from sin. He never gives you a dream to trouble you, so do not trouble over them.

There are other people who get troubled over thoughts that come into their minds. They do not know the source of these thoughts. A thought makes a strong impression upon their mind. They cannot shake it off. They feel that there is some hidden meaning in that thought, and they worry about it and wonder about it. Never allow yourself to be troubled over such things.

Then there are others who have thoughts of evil come into their mind. They put them away but speedily they return. They condemn themselves for these thoughts. They think they are not right with God, or they would not have such thoughts. There may be many other reasons for their coming into the mind and for their persistence in returning to the mind. Displace these thoughts by good thoughts all you can, but do not worry over them.

At many railroad crossings there are derails. If one train is about to run into another on a crossing, it can be derailed and a collision prevented. We need a derail for our troubles. Perhaps another figure would be a sidetrack. One can become quite an expert in sidetracking troubles. The best way to sidetrack our troubles is set forth in the text, "Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you." This is a lesson we all need to learn. The Lord is ever ready to help us in all times of need. We do not have to bear anything alone. The Lord is a present help in every time of trouble. Let us learn to rely upon Him.

Some people, in a different sense, have a sidetrack of their own, with an open switch. Every car of trouble

that comes along runs in on their siding. If we must have a siding we should keep the switch closed. We should keep out of other people's troubles. Most of the troubles many people have are from getting into other people's troubles. We should take precautions to pass all the troubles that do not belong to us on to the ones to whom they belong; and we should not accept them ourselves nor be partners with them in them. To be sure, we should help others all we can, but we should not load up with their troubles.

Study the verse at the head of this chapter. Get the lesson in it. Then, so face the world and so master yourself that you will not cross your bridges before you get to them nor suffer from your troubles before they arrive. Ever keep in mind the fact that most of them will miss the train and will never arrive, and whatever you might suffer from them from anticipation is useless suffering.

CHAPTER XIV

IF YOU CAN'T HELP IT

We should always like to have the ability to make things go as we wish them to go in this life. We should always like to accomplish everything we attempt. We desire all our plans to work out as we plan them. We should like to avoid all disappointments, all failures, all wrecking of our hopes and plans. Unfortunately, or perhaps sometimes fortunately, we cannot always accomplish what we desire. There are none of us but who can look back upon mistakes, failures and other things in the past that bring us regret. I suppose all of us would like to change many things in our lives. We should like to have the opportunity of trying again where we failed.

Perhaps we realize that failure was our own fault. Perhaps we look back upon errors, indiscretions, blunders, etc., that humiliate and trouble us. We live under the shadow of them. Some of us are saying to ourselves, "Oh, if I had not done it. Oh, if I had done differently." Others are saying, "I failed. What is the use to try again?"

There are others who look back upon dark things in their lives that have come upon them, seemingly through no fault of their own. They cannot get away from the influence of these things, or at least they do not do so. A blighting influence from the past permeates and darkens the present. What shall we do with those things of the past? We cannot live over those days that are gone. We cannot have another chance in the things wherein we failed. We cannot turn the clock of time back to yesterday. We are here, in today. Those

things are back in yesterday. We are eternally separated from them, so far as having power to change them is concerned. We cannot help the past.

There is but one thing left for us, that is—make the best of the present. We cannot make the best of the present if we bring into it things of the past that become present hindrances. Some wrongs of the past may be righted. Some things that have been done may be undone. If so, instead of letting the shadow of these things rest upon our lives and their weight upon our consciences, we should make haste to do all that can be done to right them. There are people who should make right things they have done that have wronged people. I shall not tell you to pass these by, or to forget them. Instead, I must say it is your duty to do everything possible to make right any wrongs of the past.

I am talking in this chapter of things we cannot help, not of things we can help or of damage we can repair. There can be no excuse for our not doing what we can do to repair errors of the past. At the same time, there are many things that cannot be improved by anything we may do. No effort of ours can make them better. We may regret the past ever so much. We may be humiliated by it. It may be a constant trouble, goading us all the time. What shall we do about such things? I find in my notebook a little verse, the origin of which I do not know:

*“For every evil under the sun
There is a remedy or there is none;
If there is one, try to find it,
If there is none, never mind it.”*

This is excellent advice. If there is a remedy for the past, try earnestly to find it, but what cannot be rem-

edied should be left to the past. Shakespeare says, "What's gone, and what's past help should be past grief." We should shut the door of the past lest the chilling breezes that blow through cause us to be unable to make proper use of the present. Paul had things in his life that troubled him. Mention is made here and there in his writings of that much regretted past. The blood of God's saints was upon his garments. He remembered the bitterness and hatred he had put into the pitiless persecution that he had visited upon the Christians. He remembered his part in the death of Stephen. He remembered how he had witnessed against many, had thrown many into prison, had brought many to death. He could not change the past. There was but one thing he could do. He resolved to do what was possible to do. He said, "One thing I do. Forgetting those things that are behind, I press forward."

Ah, yes, forgetting the past. We should like to forget things. We cannot forget them. Alas! Neither could Paul forget in the sense of banishing them from his memory. He could forget them, however, in a very practical sense, and this he did. He did not let them hinder him living a life of freedom and activity, of love and sacrifice, of wholehearted devotion to the Christ he had hated. He threw all his energies into today. He did not let vain regret hinder him. Perhaps those regrets, deep and poignant as they were, often pressed in upon him, but he pushed them aside and threw himself anew into the work he was doing, perhaps even more zealously than he would have done or could have done had he not been spurred on by these regrets.

Some are chained to the past by griefs and sorrows. Some live in the past with loved ones who have gone to a brighter clime. Some homes are kept darkened and the voice of music is hushed. A dead hand

lies upon the heart and upon the home. Such a sorrow can be a blight on the life. What shall we do? Shall we tear affection from our hearts? Shall we put from us thoughts of the happy past? No, we need not do this, but we must not walk with our sorrow and commune with it until it becomes the greatest fact in our lives.

We must resolutely overcome blighting sorrow. We must live in today. There may be a sort of grim pleasure in living in a cemetery. Such a life is but a living death. Our loved ones would not wish us thus to sorrow for them. They would desire us to enter into the activities of today. They would be remembered but not with a sorrow so deep and absorbing that it shuts out any of the happiness that might come to us today or prevents us from filling the useful place we might fill.

There are others who are not so troubled about the things of yesterday as they are about the things of today. There are people who have within themselves things that are constantly getting them into trouble. They are of an unfortunate temperament, or they have things in their disposition that are constantly cropping out, things that they try to curb but often fail to master. To be sure, we should resolutely endeavor to be masters of ourselves, but if we have things in our makeup that we cannot help—we cannot help them—and that is all there is to it. We should do all we can, but when we have done all we can, we should adjust ourselves to the facts. We should not permit these things to blight our lives.

When the Lord accepted us, He accepted us with those things in us. He knew all about them. If those things did not prevent His accepting us, they will not prevent His continuing to love us. They will not prevent our serving Him acceptably. They may cause us trouble and humiliation, but if we cannot help it, we cannot help it, so we must make the best of it.

Have you tried again and again to overcome something and still it troubles you? Well, Paul had such an experience. Of course you remember that oft-mentioned "thorn in the flesh." Paul tried to get rid of that, but the Lord did not take it away. He said, "My grace is sufficient." In other words, he said to Paul, "I am not going to take that away from you. I am going to leave it there to work a good purpose in you. I know what it will work out. You put up with it. You make the best of it. I will see that you come out all right." Now, the Lord may talk that way to us or at least may hold that attitude toward us. Paul went ahead and made the best of an unpleasant situation. He succeeded. We may do likewise.

Sometimes we are tempted to look upon ourselves as failures. I suppose all of us come short of our hopes and expectations many times. One thing, however, is certain. We shall never be real failures unless we surrender to circumstances and give up the fight. Sometimes, out of failure come the greatest victories. What seem to be the greatest failures sometimes prove to be the greatest successes. I shall quote something from the *Great Western Magazine* concerning that great man, Abraham Lincoln. It has in it a lesson of perseverance under the most trying and disconcerting circumstances one can imagine. As you read, think if you have had more failures in you life than he or more cause to give up trying.

"When Abraham Lincoln was a young man, he ran for the legislature in Illinois, and was badly swamped.

"He next entered business, failed, and spent seventeen years of his life paying up the debts of a worthless partner.

"He was in love with a beautiful young woman to whom he became engaged—then she died.

"Entering politics again, he ran for Congress and was badly defeated. He then tried to get an appointment to the United State Land Office but failed.

"He became a candidate for the United States Senate and was badly defeated.

"In 1856 he became a candidate for the Vice Presidency and was once more defeated.

"In 1858 he was defeated by Douglas.

"One failure after another—bad failures—great setbacks. In the face of all this he eventually became one of the greatest men of America, whose memory is loved and honored throughout the world."

These do not exhaust the catalog of Lincoln's failures. Many others might be added to this list. But was Lincoln a failure? By no means. Neither need you be, notwithstanding all the failures you make.

Perhaps the greatest "failure" the world ever saw was Jesus of Nazareth. Seeking to do a great work, He came to His own, but His own rejected Him. They hardened their hearts against Him. They opposed Him most bitterly. Again and again He had to escape for His life, and at last He was taken, condemned and ignominiously crucified. He who had proclaimed Himself Son of God was now a pauper, laid in a borrowed tomb, leaving His disciples disappointed, chagrined, hopeless and despairing. But was that the end? Ah, no, He rose again to be the world's Redeemer.

The question is not, "Have we made failures?" or "Will we make other failures?" We shall never become blunder-proof. We shall not always be wise and discreet in our future conduct. We do not know enough always to avoid such things. Then, too, we are often taken by surprise by things and have to act without consideration. Of course, we shall not always do the wisest and best thing.

We also have weaknesses, and these weaknesses will sometimes assert themselves. Perfection in the realm of human conduct is not a thing of this world. Paul speaks of that which is perfect as being in the future. When that time comes, we shall know as we are known. We shall see clearly, and we shall be able to do that which is wise; we shall be strong enough to meet, as they should be met, all the circumstances that arise. But now we are imperfect. We have our weaknesses and shortcomings. We should not surrender to these. We should not allow them to blight our lives nor to discourage us nor to make us feel that we are failures. We should resolutely make the best of these and face life with courage. But do you say, "I am so ashamed of my blunders and weaknesses?" Wesley's advice to his fellow ministers was, "Never be ashamed of anything but sin."

If you cannot be what you desire to be, be what you can be, and do not be ashamed of it. Do not let mistakes or imperfections prevent you from doing what you should do. I remember one young man who succeeded in getting a position that paid him a salary which for that day was looked upon as being rather unusual. Through a combination of circumstances, he lost that position. It was not his fault. His conduct reflected honor upon him. He sacrificed greatly to do what he did. He felt he was wronged. He returned to his home, surrendered to circumstances, gave up to discouragements and so far as I have learned permitted his life to be ruined by it.

This is an example of what we should avoid. But, reader, are you doing the same thing? Are you following out the same principle? If so, cease to do so. Be the man or the woman you can be and hold up your head and look the world and circumstances in the face and

assert your manhood or your womanhood. Say, "I have failed, but I am not a failure. I have failed, but I will yet succeed."

There are many things that people have to face—home troubles, business reverses, debts, physical handicaps and many like things. But look upon the great names of history and see how many of those who had such things to meet have risen above them and in spite of them have resolutely gone forward to victory.

Many people seem to do well until some crisis comes and they fail. This failure seems to change the whole course of their lives. They look upon their lives differently and hold a different attitude toward themselves than formerly. I had such an experience. Actively engaged in evangelistic work, feeling that I had developed to the place where I was prepared to do more effectual work than hitherto, having plenty of opportunities for work, I was going forward, hopeful, even confident of success. Nevertheless in the midst of this I was stricken. Worst of all I realized that I had brought it upon myself. Lying upon my bed suffering day and night continually, without respite, I would look back to the time I was injured and think I had no one to blame but myself. The fact that it was wholly an unexpected thing, that I had no way of foreseeing and thus could not avoid it, did not change the fact. I had brought it upon myself. Oh, the days and months of self-condemnation, of bitter regret! It darkened all nature. It brought me to the verge of despair.

Again and again I said to myself, "I am only a has-been. The future holds nothing desirable for this life. I have nothing to look forward to. So far as my work is concerned and my life among men, I had better died." For eight long weary years I went on without any ray of hope shining for the future. But I learned to make the

best of the present, to turn resolutely away from the past and to cease self-condemnation. After I had learned this lesson, God opened the door of opportunity to me again in a most unexpected way. He has given me a larger field than ever before, and to the glory of His grace I believe He has made me more useful than I ever should have been without learning these hard lessons.

Whatever there may be in your life that cannot be helped, do not sit down and fold your hands and spend your days mourning. Make the best of it. There is a way out, and that way leads to victory and success.

CHAPTER XV

INGROWING THOUGHTS

A lady said of a certain person who frequently had trouble in her spiritual life, "Her chief trouble is that her thoughts turn inward too much." Ingrowing thoughts, like ingrowing toenails, are sometimes very painful. There is such a thing as focusing our thoughts too much internally. Wherever we center our thoughts, we produce a reaction. Centering our thoughts on our own spiritual difficulties, on our own inner experiences and upon our feelings and sensations, is likely to produce an effect entirely different from that which we desire to produce.

Dr. Stephen Smith, hale, hearty and happy at the age of ninety-nine, said, among other things, in stating his philosophy of life, "War has killed its millions, but introspection has killed its tens of millions. Next to an ill advised and over plentiful diet, it has shortened more lives than almost any other cause that we can name. The man who is forever thinking about himself is degenerating. The hardest patients I have had to handle were those given to introspection and self-analysis."

Note those persons who are extremely careful about themselves in physical matters. They are always concerned with what effect things will have upon them. They wonder if this will hurt them, and how that will affect them. They are afraid of taking cold, and of this, that and the other thing. They make living too serious a business. They are nearly always the victims of their own carefulness. The one who gets along well physically is usually the one who uses good common sense and then practically forgets he has a body.

In spiritual things, it is the people who are always taking their spiritual temperature, looking at their spiritual tongue, feeling their spiritual pulse and measuring their spiritual stature who have the most trouble. Some people are constantly questioning their own motives. They are constantly asking, "Should I have done that?" They give microscopic attention to the details of their life. They are all the time asking, "Did I do right?" "Am I right?" Everything must have a thorough microscopical examination. The smallest detail of life must not be passed without attention.

It is true that the Bible says, "Examine yourselves," but it has no reference to such microscopic examinations. If we should be going somewhere and our foot should slip, we should not take for granted that we had turned around and headed in the opposite direction. That one little slip is but an incident in the journey. When the path is observed as a whole, that little incident is only a trifle. The general course has been forward.

Some people cannot sing the song of Christian joyfulness because they are too much absorbed in examining themselves. Neither do they feel like singing, for they are constantly finding little faults and magnifying them out of all proportion to their significance. We all know people who have ingrowing thoughts. It is proper for us to pay due heed to ourselves, but this ought to occupy a comparatively small portion of our time. Some people have so much trouble keeping themselves right that they never get anything else done. The trouble is they are making too hard a task of it. They would be just as nearly right without making half the effort, or perhaps a tenth of the effort. In other words, if they did not make such an effort they would not even then go wrong.

We need rather to be concerned to have sufficient velocity to produce a momentum that will keep us on the way. When I first started to learn bicycle riding, it took all my attention to keep balanced, and in spite of myself I would fall over now and then. I soon became enough accustomed to riding that I guided the wheel automatically, and gave no more attention to balance than when walking. At first, I was constantly turning the wheel this way and that. Consequently I made a crooked path. That is why many Christians do so poorly. They are so intent upon keeping themselves right that they have their eyes constantly upon themselves. Let them look ahead, become intent on reaching what lies before them, and they will make real progress. They will not fall over nearly so easily as when they are so careful about themselves.

In studying ourselves and losing sight of others, we become morbid. We brood over our shortcomings or seeming shortcomings. We lose our courage. Things look dark and discouraging. We may say that satan is after us, that he is accusing us. Most accusations have their origin in ourselves. We are accusing ourselves. We are condemning ourselves and imagine that it is Satan doing so.

There is a scientific side to this that we ought to understand. There are two parts to our mental being. There are many things that go on in our mind of which we are conscious. We think certain things and know we think them. We consciously follow out certain lines or trends of thought. On the other hand, there is a part of our mind of whose workings we are unaware. This is called the subconscious mind.

You have often noticed that a thought, all worked out and complete, comes into your mind apparently from nowhere. Or you are suddenly affected by an emotion.

You cannot account for feeling that emotion. If it is a pleasant emotion, you enjoy it and think little about it. If it is an unpleasant one, you may be troubled by it and wonder what caused it. The secret of the matter is things have been going on in your subconscious mind of which you knew nothing. Suddenly, what was in your subconscious mind was projected into your conscious mind.

Perhaps a few days ago you wondered over something that happened, and questioned whether or not you were what you ought to be spiritually. That thought presently faded out of your mind. You thought no more about it. A week, two weeks, or a month later, you suddenly, and without any seeming reason, felt a sense of condemnation come over you. You wondered what caused it. Perhaps you thought satan was at work. The only trouble was you did not understand that the thought you had the other day and had forgotten about kept on working in your subconscious mind and just now has projected itself into your conscious mind.

This is the secret of much of our trouble. Those accusations you had did not come from satan. They are the product of your own thoughts. You started the thought working then got your mind off on something else. But that did not get the thought out of your mind. What shall we do to hinder such things from working in our mind and having such a depressing, discouraging effect upon us? When the thing comes into your mind that starts this train of thought, meet it with assertion of victory, meet it with real faith. Drive it from your mind with some good thought. Assure your heart that God is with you and is taking care of you and that no evil will come to you. This will uproot the other thought from your mind, and it will not continue to work in your subconscious mind.

Remember, when you allow yourself to think discouraging thoughts, when you allow yourself to question your motives and examine yourself with such attentive scrutiny, you are loading up your subconscious mind with what sooner or later will come out into your conscious mind again to trouble you. Therefore, do not plant such seeds of troublesome thoughts in your mind. Plant thoughts of faith, of victory, of trust, of assurance, of confidence, and these will bear fruit that you will be glad to reap.

We can imagine things about ourselves as easily as we can imagine things about others. Our imagination can be misdirected. Larson has said, "Imagination, when misdirected, can produce more ills than any other faculty." Many people are tortured by their imagination. Imaginary ills and imaginary foes beset them.

Of course we shall have heartaches in life. Of course we shall have things we can hardly keep from thinking over. But we should avoid magnifying them. We should treat them with good common sense. Instead of lavishing so much time upon ourselves and trying so hard to keep right ourselves, if we turn our attention toward helping others, we find many of our own troubles cured, without any medicine. About two thirds of our troubles might be cured by forgetting them. Someone has written,

*"If you were busy being glad,
And cheering others who were sad,
Altho your heart might ache a bit,
You'd soon forget to notice it."*

Most of our troubles are imaginary or at least nine-tenths imaginary. Paul speaks about "casting down imagination." II Corinthians 10:5. That is something we should all learn. Do not expect of yourself more than

you expect of others. Judge yourself by the same standards by which you judge others. God expects no more of you than He expects of others. He does not want you to be melancholy. He wants you to be joyful, to sing the songs of His kingdom, to have a heart full of praises. To have these you must turn your eyes to God more and see His beauties and perfections. Forget yourself and think of God and His goodness.

The fruits of thoughts are feelings. If you do not think right, you cannot feel right. Naturally when you do not feel as you think you ought to feel, you are ready to condemn yourself and say, "Well, there must be something wrong." Yes, there is something wrong, but in the majority of instances that wrong is merely in your thoughts. If there is something actually wrong in your heart, wrong in your relations with God, or wrong in your relation with your fellow men, you can locate that more easily. It is some very definite thing. It is not something that you need hunt for for days and cannot find. The things that stand between us and God, or between us and others, if they are worth noticing at all, are at least large enough to be easily discovered and are definite enough to be easily understood. The remedy for them is easily applied and its results are definite and easily known.

We should understand clearly that those things that are obscure, that trouble us, that we cannot locate, and that bring gloom and despondency and discouragement, are things that originate in the wrong outlook, or in a wrong attitude toward ourselves. They are the fruits of wrong thinking.

So let us get rid of our ingrowing thoughts. Let us get outside of ourselves into the sunshine of God. Then our hearts will become lighter. We shall see the goodness of God, and almost before we know it, we shall be singing the song of the victorious life.

CHAPTER XVI

TRoublesome Neighbors

Sometimes an otherwise pleasant neighborhood will be kept in an uproar of trouble by a few troublemakers. Human troublemakers are not to be compared with some other kinds.

I am fortunate enough to have splendid neighbors. Nevertheless, in this good neighborhood, there is a great deal of trouble caused by certain ones. The names of these troublemakers are not Jones, and Adams and Thompson or anything of that sort. There are three of these families of troublemakers. Two of them are the "ifs" and the "maybes." Not far away live the "buts," who are close relatives of the others. Most of these belong to the "doubt" family or to their close neighbors, the "unwillingings."

These "ifs" and "buts" are a numerous brood. They are quite vocal. They are always ready to make suggestions to us. They are full of questions. They are constantly reminding us of the uncertainty of things, and not infrequently they make them appear much more uncertain than they really are.

Let me introduce some of the "ifs." Here is one, "If I were just sure." This one suggests that you don't really know. You should be a little more certain. You might make a mistake.

Perhaps you are already acquainted with this one. It says, "If I were just sure I am saved"; "If I were just sure I am right"; "If I could know so that I could not question it."

How many times you have been tormented by this bad neighbor! Perhaps you were satisfied for a time

about your experience, or about other things, but this has been succeeded by questioning and uncertainty and wondering. This "if" makes you frequent visits, but is never a welcome guest. You have to deal with him some way. Are you able to do so satisfactorily?

Another "if" is, "If I didn't feel so." Yes, you would like to have pleasant feelings all the time, but that cannot always be. Whenever you have feelings you dislike, or that cause you trouble, this "if" is ready to suggest that you should not be too sure of your position. It says you should not undertake any spiritual work until you feel differently. You agree with it and say, "If I didn't feel so, then—"

A full brother to this "if" is, "If things didn't seem so." To be sure things sometimes look out of proportion. We have feelings that things are not as they ought to be. We cannot get things to seem right. We are troubled, restless and uncertain because of the trouble this "if" gives us.

The next "ifs" are twins. "If I were not tempted so," and "If I were not tried so." Yes, how happy you could be if it were not for these twins. But they are your close neighbors. They visit you every now and then. And how tormenting they can be! If you could move away and leave them you would rejoice. But if you should move, they would move with you. You must always expect to have them as neighbors, so you must find a way of adjusting yourself to them, so that they will not spoil your happiness or hinder your life.

Another "if" that has brought terror to many a soul is, "If I am not right." This "if" can visit you on nearly any occasion. It has no manners. It may come in the dead of night. It may come when you are getting along well. It may come when you are having troubles, when you are bothered, tempted or not feeling good physically.

But whenever it comes it tends to give you a spiritual shock. It makes you ask the question, "What if I am mistaken?" or sometimes, "What if I am deceived?" A great many people suffer because they fear to be deceived. It is needless to suffer from such fear. God will not let an honest soul be deceived with respect to His relations with Him. It is only the ones who will not have the truth to whom He sends delusions. It is our privilege to know our situation and not to worry about being deceived. Sin is deceitful, but righteousness, never.

Another "if" of the "doubt" family is, "If God doesn't...." We must have help from God. We put our trust in Him. But what if He should fail us? What if His promises should not be fulfilled?

Another "if" is, "if I fail." The possibility of failure is ever before us, and we can let this "if" be a great barrier to all our efforts if we will. Another "if" is, "If satan should...." Yes, we can imagine many things that he might do. We can fear him and let this fear become a bondage. This fear is a troublesome neighbor to many. Another "if" is, "If circumstances...." It is always whispering about things that may happen. It creates foreboding and fears of the future. These are only a few of the "ifs" that live close neighbors to many of us.

We now turn our attention to the "but" family. First, "but I." It says, "But I am so weak." Then it shows all our weakness. It calls our attention to the failures of the past. It pictures up how likely we are to fail in the future. Yes, we should like to do this, that, and the other, but "my weakness!" It also says, "But my ignorance—I do not know how. If I try, I shall only blunder."

There is much being said in psychological circles about inferiority complexes. There are a great many people who have a sense of inferiority. They think others can do

things better than they; that others are better than they are. They think they must always be in the rear of the procession. They are always minimizing their own abilities and their various good qualities. "But" is the favorite word of this inferiority complex. It can always imagine difficulties that do not exist.

Another of this family is, "But they." It is the expression of man fear. "But they will say"; "But they will think"; "But they will do." Many people are held back and their lives stunted by constant fear of what others think, say, or do.

Another of the family is, "But if." This thing will happen, that thing will happen, or the other thing will happen. This obstacle will arise; that difficulty must be met.

These "buts" and "ifs" and all their kind have one spokesman for them all that says the final word. When it is pointed out to us that there are ways to overcome all these troublesome neighbors, when the victory way is made clear, when we are exhorted to be free, to be our real selves, to rise above these things, when our friends would instill courage into us, then this spokesman is heard. It is, "Yes, but maybe." It admits all that has been said, but still it has some additional fears to bring up.

What will you do with these "buts," the "ifs," these troublesome neighbors of yours? You have to do something with them. Sometimes you can ignore them. At other times you have to use other methods to overcome them. Anyway, you must overcome them before you will have learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart*. As long as you are tormented by these, you will not feel like singing. It is possible for you to arrive at the place and adopt the attitude that will enable you to look all these "ifs" and "buts" in the face and then go unflinchingly on your way heavenward.

You must put them to rout with the sword of faith. You must shield yourself from their darts with the shield of faith when they assail you. The “ifs” and “buts” are what gives faith its opportunity. Faith is intended as an antidote for uncertainty and fear. It will cure the worst case of it. It will put to flight all your foes. It will silence your questioning. It will soothe your fears and quiet your troubled heart. It will make you conscious of your strength. It will enable you to overcome your temptations. It will keep you steadfast through your trials. It will enable you to trust regardless of your feelings. It will give you assurance.

The little girl, taught by her teacher in school to punctuate, learned a lesson in natural things that would be well for us to learn in spiritual things. She came home and told her mother what she had learned. Her mother said, “Indeed, and how did you do it?” “Well, Mamma,” said the little girl, “It is just as easy as can be. If you say a thing *is so*, you just put a hatpin after it. But if you are only asking whether it is so or not, you put a buttonhook.”

The hatpin, of course, represented a period, and the buttonhook, an interrogation mark. I fear some of us have too great a supply of buttonhooks. We are putting them after too many things. We need a greater supply of hatpins. Whenever God says anything, whenever He makes us a promise, be sure you put a hatpin after it. Your feelings will tell you to use the buttonhook, but it does not belong there. It belongs after nothing that God says. So when you go to read your Bible, get a handful of hatpins. After every promise you read put a hatpin. After everything God says, put a hatpin. Then be sure that later you do not replace it with a buttonhook.

Then, too, we need to put many hatpins after things in our own life. Say, “God will not fail,” then put a hatpin

after it. Say, "I shall not fail," and the hatpin. Settle things, then put hatpins after them, and never allow yourself to change to buttonhooks. God wants us to be certain.

Faith is not only the antidote for fear and uncertainty. It is also the preventive of doubt and fear. Faith is the anchor of the soul. Anchor yourself with it by definitely exercising it each day.

In your life, do what God wants you to do. Do what duty demands, then make God responsible for the contingencies. When you work for anyone, you obey his instructions, and then you let him be responsible for the consequences. That is exactly the way to do with God. Do His will, do your duty, and then do not be fearful of the consequences. Put the "ifs" and "buts" to rout. Keep up your shield of faith, wield your sword of faith, and you will conquer these enemies.

CHAPTER XVII

ERASING THE INTERROGATION MARKS

Life is full of mysteries. There are many things we wish we might understand. It would be much easier to go happily upon life's way if we could understand everything that happens to us and if we could see our way before us.

We all ask questions. We all wonder why some things occur and what they mean. But some of us are more given to asking questions than others. Some put a question mark after everything. We have pointed out in the previous chapter some of the questions commonly asked. Many people form the *habit* of being uncertain. They cultivate indecision, so it is hard for them to make up their mind. Following this, year after year, increases the uncertainty of their lives. They are never quite sure about things. There is a lack of that positiveness that gives certainty.

How shall we overcome that uncertainty? First, we must set ourselves to the task of breaking ourselves of the habit we have developed. That is not easy, but it is possible. We should form right habits of thinking; we should look upon things from a reasonable standpoint. We should not look upon people and circumstances, and everything about us, as enemies. We should not live in a defensive attitude. We should not believe that everything we attempt to do will turn out bad nor that everything is against us.

The majority of things in life are in our favor. God created our environment, speaking in a general way, and He did not make that environment an always hostile

*Elijah was in hiding because God instructed him to do so. Read I Kings 17:3.

environment. It is true that there are many obstacles in life, many unfavorable influences. But the helpful things are more numerous. The influences for good are more prevalent than are the evil influences. This is true when we hold the right attitude ourselves. God wants us to get the interrogation marks out of a great many things. He want us to know definitely our relations to Himself. He wants us to have an inner consciousness that these relations are acceptable to Him. He wants us to have a religious experience, with such a basis of certainty that it brings to us a constant assurance of rightness.

We need a consciousness of God's fatherhood. Many know from an intellectual standpoint that God is their father, but they cannot realize it. They *hope* He is their father. In a way they believe He is their father, but when it comes to having the inner satisfaction of realizing the relation of sonship to Him, they know little of Him. To them it is not a practical thing.

Some imagine God is ready to cut them off from Himself for any little trifling deviation from propriety. Their life is influenced more by fear of God than by love of God. If they have a consciousness that there has been something in their life worthy of reproof, they count themselves estranged from God. All their joy is gone. Their attitude toward themselves and toward their relation to God is well illustrated by something a woman said to me recently. These are her words, "If I had to ask the Lord to forgive me, I would think I would have to get justified and sanctified over again."

Is God really our Father? Would He so readily break those tender ties between His soul and ours and cast us into outer darkness even though we had been overcome by some sudden temptation, if we had in weakness yielded to something without intent to offend Him?

Most of us have experienced times when we felt God's disapproval for something. We recognized that we were in fault. As soon as the thing was done or said, we immediately felt a pang of regret. To a certain extent, such things may make a breach between us and God, but this breach is only partial and may at once be repaired.

If we take the right course, God is ready to forgive. He is ready to repair the breach, to restore the interrupted flow of fellowship. Experiences such as this are not interruptions of the Christian life; they are merely regrettable incidents in it. Those whom God cuts off are those who turn away from Him, those who in spirit rebel against Him.

Sin lies in the attitude of the will toward God. Many times, things are done that need repentance of a certain sort, which, because the will has not turned away from God, do not result in one's being cut off from God. Perhaps we have all heard teaching of such a technical nature that it made a person either a Christian of angelic character and deportment or else a sinner rejected of God. Between these two there is a great middle ground. None of us are too angelic, but at the same time we are not servants of the devil. Between these two extremes lies a great range of human experience in which men walk with God, their heavenly Father, guided by His justice but overshadowed with His mercy.

Many times in life we think some strange thing has happened to us. We have experiences we cannot understand. Perhaps many of us have not learned God's method of dealing with His sons and daughters sufficiently to understand that it is not His displeasure that is being manifested but His hand of discipline. He has loved us with an everlasting love. That is not a love that can be easily broken. God's acts flow out of His love toward us. That everlasting love manifests itself in everlasting kindness. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "...I have loved

thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

This is God's attitude toward all His children, even those who have faults and shortcomings. God does not expect us to be as wise as He is nor to exhibit the same power in our life nor to be always as perfect as He is in our conduct. *He does expect us to do right.* He does expect us sincerely to try to please Him. But He does not expect us to be free from blunders, mistakes, weaknesses and those frailties that are commonly found in humanity. We should not excuse ourselves in doing anything improper. If we do so, He will not excuse us. But with loving mercy, He draws us back to Him. As it is written, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." That pity manifests itself in His long-suffering, His tender mercy, His ready forgiveness.

One thing very difficult for many people to learn is that the chastening rod of God is applied in love, not in anger. We are told that God "scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and that that scourging is the proof of our sonship. So often people are inclined to take it as an evidence that they are no longer sons. They look upon it as a mark of God's disapproval, or even of His anger. We are told that His chastening is for our profit. He does it not for His own pleasure, but that we may be made better by it. It is a mark of His love. He says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten..." Revelation 3:19. (Read Hebrews 12:5-13.)

Note carefully God's attitude in His chastening. We are all ready to admit the truth of the eleventh verse which says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." None of us like to be chastened, but yet that is necessary; out of it come the fruits of righteousness. When the Lord chastens us, therefore, let us bear it with meekness. Let us profit by it.

Let us not be grieved and discouraged. The scripture says, "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Hebrews 12:12. You can understand what that means. It means—stand up like a man. Do not bow down and tremble for fear. And it adds, "Make straight paths for your feet."

Gold is purified in the furnace. It is not destroyed; it is made the better by the flames. You and I must pass through the furnace. The purpose of the furnace is that we may be purged from our dross, that we may be refined that we may be rid of grossness, that we may be made more spiritual. Does the gold ask, "Why hast thou put me in the furnace?" If you and I have to pass through the furnace of affliction or sorrow, of losses or failures, let us submit ourselves to the hand of God. Let us not question His mercy or His goodness; neither let us question ourselves. Let us endure as "seeing Him who is invisible." Let us trust His hand and trust His love. Let us not fear that we shall be destroyed.

We must often endure the chisel of pain as God carves in us His image. We desire to be in His image. We desire to be godlike in character. Remember that God hurts only to heal. Like the surgeon, He does not hurt willingly but only of necessity. We have read of the balm of Gilead, but of what use is that balm until we are hurt? There would be no such balm were there no hurts in life.

God knows there are things that will hurt us. He knows that sufferings of various sorts are inevitable. He knows that we shall bring upon ourselves, by lack of wisdom or carefulness or by lack of understanding or in other ways, many things that are hard to endure. But He would not have these things unduly trouble us nor make us feel that He has become our enemy. He would have us ever to recognize that He is our tender, compassionate Father. He would comfort us in our

troubles as a mother comforteth her children. In our times of trouble, He would not have us run from Him nor shrink from His presence. He would have us run into His arms and tell Him all our troubles, our questionings, our heartaches. He would have us so to trust Him that the interrogation marks would be removed.

So many Christians are always on the defensive. They are always facing an enemy either without or within. Their lives are a constant battle with themselves, a struggle to repress something. They are constantly harassed lest they do wrong or feel wrong, lest they be deceived, etc. They are a prey to apprehensions. They are constantly trying to strengthen themselves in an attitude of resistance against something. They hold themselves under a strain. They are constantly troubled over things that God would not have them be troubled over. Instead of living thus, God wants us to live positive lives, to be on the offensive, to be victorious. He desires us to be courageous, confident, serene and without anxiety, conscious of divine help.

The open-hearted God is a fountain of power. He would have our hearts open to receive His power. He would not have us trust in self but in His sufficiency of grace and power for our every need. He would have us constantly believe that in any situation that may arise there will be no lack of what is necessary to make us overcomers. By believing this, and acting as though we believe it, we *shall be* overcomers. We shall rid ourselves of many of life's question marks. Some of them will remain to eternity, but many of them need trouble us no longer. Those that cannot be removed need not darken our lives. Trusting Him we can go onward, singing the glad song that flows from the sense of His Fatherhood and His understanding love.

CHAPTER XVIII

BUILDING BLOCKS OF FAITH

Faith is one of the most powerful elements in human life. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a picture gallery of the heroes of faith. It begins with a definition of faith. We always need a definition, that we may know what we are talking about. Paul's definition is an accurate one when properly understood. "Now faith is the substance [ground or confidence, margin] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The American Standard Version renders it thus, "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." In the margin it reads, "Now faith is the giving substance to things hoped for, a test of things not seen."

This is a practical rather than a definitive picture of faith. Faith is accepting a thing as true and acting upon that thing as truth with all confidence. As it relates to God, it is taking God at His word. It is believing His promises. It is personal acceptance of His promises, relying on those promises and making them the basis of the life.

One phase of faith is confident trust: the other is confident action. We read of the "full assurance of faith." Such full assurance in the old time worthies resulted in great accomplishments. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and elsewhere, we read of what was done through faith. We look upon those who accomplished such things as, in some way, superhuman. We are inclined to believe, as the doubters of this world believe, that the day of faith in religion has largely passed. In

reality that is not true. There are mighty works of faith being accomplished today. Faith is just as effective today as in any former age. There are people now who have faith, and the might of that faith is manifested in mighty deeds and accomplishments.

Many wonderful things are accomplished by faith today, though the world goes on its way in ignorance of them. Most people think there is little faith today. They overlook the fact that when these worthies of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews were living, the people did not consider their faith as amounting to very much. They were probably entirely unaware of the great accomplishments of faith that were going on around them. In like manner, many people, in fact most people, are ignorant of the wonderful accomplishments of faith that are so prevalent today.

When we read of the accomplishments of faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, it is natural for us to say, "I am not like those; I cannot have faith such as they had." I am not so sure of that. They were only common folk with perhaps little more than average faith. It may be that we shall accomplish a little less than they accomplished, but faith in us will produce real results just the same.

The day in which they lived was no more favorable for faith than today. In fact, there was not so much faith then as today. Christian knowledge and Christian experience have laid a broader ground for faith, a surer foundation than they had in former ages. Faith is just as mighty today and will accomplish as much as in the ancient day. Perhaps we shall not duplicate the things they did. That may not be necessary or perhaps it would not serve any good purpose if we should do so. But faith is the gift of God, and He is willing to impart it to each of us.

We already have much natural faith. The faith we have is the basis of our lives. Without faith the business world could not operate. Home life would not be possible. Religion could not exist. Government would be powerless. No great undertakings would ever be begun. Accomplishments, of whatsoever sort, are based on faith. No wonder we are urged in the Scriptures to "have faith in God."

Faith in God is believing Him. We can have no satisfactory relations with Him, except through faith. We are saved by faith; we are kept by faith. We are justified by faith. We stand by faith. We rejoice by faith. Assurance of immortality is a matter of faith. Faith is the victory that overcometh the world.

The apostles had faith. Jesus said to them, "Ye believe in God." Faith brings certainty. Without faith there can be no certainty. It brought certainty to Paul. He said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

God is worthy to be believed. He cannot lie because His whole nature is truth and righteousness. He never changes. He never forgets His promises. He never turns away from those who trust Him. Therefore, have faith in God. We should hold the attitude toward the Word of God that was held by an old saint who was nearing the sunset of life. A minister quoted to her, "Lo, I am with you alway," and said, "What a blessed promise this is." "Ah," said she, "that is not a promise, it is just a fact."

God's promises are facts. They are actual facts, or potential facts. They are either facts to us or may become facts to us by trusting them. The greatest fact in the lives of God's people is that they believe in God, and they act upon that belief in a way that produces definite results in Christian living—holiness of heart

and life, and true happiness. In fact, there can be no other basis of true happiness, save faith. It is the foundation of all. To believe in God as the New Testament pictures Him, to accept Him as He is represented to be, and to submit to Him as such faith should lead us to do is to be happy.

One needful thing is that we believe in God as He reveals Himself to be. We must do this *quite apart from any inner feelings we may have about Him or any fears we may have about Him*. He is what He reveals Himself to be. If we feel He may be other than what He represents Himself to be, it is because we do not definitely believe that representation of Himself is true. We read God's promises, and often we cannot feel that they mean just what they say or that God will make them true to us. We fear and tremble when facing various things in life, though God has promised to be with us and help us. He has promised us victory through Jesus Christ all along the Christian way. Yet how many times we shrink and tremble and walk in uncertainty.

Unbelief is the source of all this. Abraham believed God; therefore he did not stumble at God's promise. He took God at His word, then acted upon His word just as though there could be no such thing as questioning it. God's Word is true. His promises were meant to be fulfilled. They are "yea and amen" to everyone who believeth. God has no desire to avoid fulfilling that which He has promised to do. He is under no compulsion. He promised because He *wanted* to do the things He promised to do.

He will do what He has promised. Do you believe it? It is true, whether or not you believe it. You will get the benefit of it only by believing it. You can believe it. You have the power to believe it. All fears that God will not do what He has promised are foolish fears. If you will

believe, God will do the rest. If you will trust there will be no failure. If you will go ahead in faith, doubting nothing, your way will be prepared before you. The victory will ever be yours. You will be able to stand in the evil day. Whatever comes cannot overwhelm you. Your strength will be equal to your need. "Have faith in God."

The Psalmist declared that he would not fear though war was made upon him. That was the language of faith. Faith gave him courage. It will give you courage. There is no telling what God will do for those who trust Him. What will earthly governments do for their citizens? Here is an illustration: Great Britain sent ten thousand men on a long voyage by sea, then seven hundred miles over sun-scorched trails through the jungles of Africa to fight their way through an armed and brave enemy to rescue one man. That man had been arrested and imprisoned illegally and unjustly. His life was at stake. So Great Britain risked the lives of ten thousand men that he might be saved.

If an earthly government will do this to save one of its citizens, what will the government of heaven do to save one of its citizens who appeals to it? Jesus said twelve legions of angels were ready to assist Him and to defend Him, and we are told that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, to deliver them." "Have faith in God."

The life of faith is the most satisfactory of all lives. In fact, it is the only satisfactory life. Matthew Henry has said, "None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith."

Children implicitly trust their parents. They believe they will be protected and cared for. They believe their needs will be supplied. They believe they have nothing to fear. They have the confidence expressed by the little boy who was threatened with injury by a larger boy. He

said, as he looked the other squarely in the face, "No, you won't hurt me. My daddy won't let you." If we have the same confident trust in God, we can say, "God will not let you" do the things that are threatened. God *will* protect us. God *will* help us.

This is not imagination. It is reality. We should cultivate an attitude of faith toward God, an expectancy that He will take care of us. This brings to us the confident assurance that we have nothing to fear. This in turn brings rest and peace. When we have learned to exercise such faith, we have learned the *Secret of the Singing Heart*.

C. B. Larson says, "We should train ourselves to meet everything in that attitude of mind that expects all things to work out right." Why should we not have such an attitude? Why should we not expect such things? We have every reason to be confident of this result. Instead of questioning, fearing or trembling, lest we may fail, let us exercise definite faith in God and day by day build up ourselves and erect a structure of Christian character and Christian life, worthy of the God who helps us. Someone has said, "Do not wonder if you will fail, but think how you are going to succeed." That is the attitude with which we should face life. Success is the product of faith. We should expect to succeed as well as determine to succeed.

Faith produces the building blocks wherewith we build up life. These building blocks of faith are not like the child's blocks, with which it builds up a tottery structure which falls at a touch. No, faith furnishes concrete blocks to build an enduring structure. With them, we can build a life that the earthquakes of unfavorable circumstances cannot throw down.

Faith manifests itself in or leads to obedience. If we believe God is King and has the right to rule over us,

and if we believe the Bible is His law, it will bring us into an attitude of obedience. It will be our joy to do His will. Such faith will end rebellion. There will be no questioning, but sincere, wholehearted obedience. It will not be the obedience of fear but the obedience of love. Its language is, "I delight to do thy will, O God."

Faith also manifests itself in submission to God. God's will becomes sweet to us, and this submission to Him becomes a great building force in our lives.

This faith also manifests itself in fidelity and loyalty to principles of right. It makes us willing to sacrifice and to serve and makes service fruitful in joyfulness.

Faith results in honoring God by giving credit to His promises. If we shall "set to our seal that God is true" then we can say like the prophet in II Kings 6, "He that is for us is more than they that be against us." Faith has an inborn courage that can face anything. This courage is not the result of assumption. It is founded on solid facts.

It is not enough to believe in God. We must believe in ourselves as well. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Men who succeed have faith in themselves and faith in their fellows. Doubt either, and you are doomed."

Sometimes it is easier to believe in God than to believe in ourselves, but there are abundant reasons why we should have faith in ourselves. If we know we are sincere, earnest and trying to do God's will, if we know our purposes are right purposes and our actions are based on such purposes, we have an excellent foundation for faith in ourselves. I do not mean faith in ourselves apart from God, but faith that God and we are partners, that God and we can accomplish what is necessary to accomplish. God does not want us to go through life like shrinking criminals. He wants us to walk out boldly on the highways of life, unafraid that

He will fail us and unafraid that we shall fail. We need self-respect. We need to have confidence in ourselves, in the sincerity of our motives, in our just and right intentions.

Again, we should have faith in God's respect for us. It is not humility to call ourselves "worms of the dust." We are men and women. We are sons of God. We are somebody. We are worthy of God. Jesus said, "They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy." To be sure there is a standpoint from which we should consider ourselves unworthy and unprofitable. That is not an attitude of self-depreciation. It is only recognizing facts. Nevertheless that is only part of the truth. We have wonderful possibilities. We are wonderful beings. God counts us worthy to stand in His presence before His throne. There is therefore no need that we should go through life in sackcloth and ashes bewailing what we are. We should recognize that God respects us and esteems us. He would not have sacrificed His Son for us had this not been true.

We should have faith in our Christian experience. I have seen many downcast, doubting people. When I asked them what is the matter, some said, "I don't feel right." When I asked, "Why don't you feel right?" some answered, "I don't know, but I don't feel right."

Reader, you may have the same experience. Perhaps *you* don't feel right. Well, what of it? Your emotions are not the test of your spiritual state. Some people feel bad physically when there is very little wrong with them, perhaps nothing of any consequence. Others may feel all right when they are in the grasp of a deadly disease. Just so spiritually. You cannot tell by your emotions what is your relation with God. Your emotions were never intended to be evidences of your spiritual standing. We must stand by faith, learn to exercise faith,

learn to live by faith. Judge yourself righteously. Do not let your feelings master your faith. Make your faith master your feelings. As a general thing, when you believe right you will feel right, but very often faith is based on feelings instead of on realities. It does not matter so much how you feel. How *are* you? This is to be settled by your faith, quite apart from your feelings, and when you settle it, leave your feelings out of the question as evidence.

We should make a practice of building into our lives every day the building blocks of faith; not building blocks of doubts and fears, anxieties and worries. There are plenty of these building blocks of faith to be had. We shall have more to say upon this subject further on. In learning to build with these building blocks of faith, we learn the *Secret of the Singing Heart*, of a joyful, happy Christian experience, of certainty for the future and just as much certainty for the present.

CHAPTER XIX

SOLDIERS

We have already pointed out that life was not intended for us merely to have a good time, to seek pleasure and to enjoy ourselves. It is a time for building Christian character and for accomplishing things. Some people think a Christian ought to have no trouble, no conflict, no difficulties. Some who become Christians expect to have a joyful, easy, satisfying time as Christians. There *is* joy in becoming a Christian. There is much inner satisfaction. There is peace, rest and victory. But the Christian life has another side. The young Christian who starts out joyfully with God's blessing upon him finds sooner or later that life will challenge him. It will take strength, courage and determination to meet its many problems and difficulties and to conquer its enemies.

It has been said, "When we are converted, we mount up with wings as eagles, then we run and are not weary, and later we must learn to walk and not faint."

We are in the midst of a great conflict. The hosts of good and evil are in deadly combat. The sound of this battle comes to our ears from every direction. Whether we will or not, we are in this conflict upon one side or the other. It was said that on the battlefields of France the larks would sometimes fly up into the heavens and sing even amidst the roar of battle. Likewise the Christian can ascend to the heights of God and sing, even in this world of conflict. His song need not be quenched; his spirit need not be broken. He is in this battle and he cannot help himself; so he should be a worthy soldier.

It is impossible that we be neutral. Jesus said, "he that is not for me is against me." The weight of our influence, the result of our actions, the force of our example are on one side or the other. We must "show our colors." The cry that echoed in the camp of Israel still echoes in the world, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Those who really are on one side yet pretend to be upon the other are hypocrites. There is a line of clear distinction, in life, spirit and character, between a true Christian and a sinner, no matter how moral that sinner may be. That distinction is always clear to the eyes of God. Sometimes it may be obscured to the world, but the distinction is real just the same. We are on Christ's side and with Him against all evil, or we are against Him.

There are some who desire to be secret Christians. In my youth I was very timid. I desired to be a Christian, yet I feared to say anything about it; so I thought I would be a Christian in my own heart and take no part in the public worship of God. This was an unsatisfactory life, but I counted myself a Christian. Later when I was brought face to face with the facts, I found that I was not a Christian at all. When I truly became a Christian through the saving grace of God, I was ready immediately to identify myself with the Christians of my community. I was no longer ashamed to be called a Christian.

Jesus said that if we be ashamed of Him before men, He shall be ashamed of us before His Father and the holy angels. A truly loyal Christian does not want anyone to think he is on the world's side. In our Civil War, it was a great offense to question the loyalty of an individual. This was also true in the World War. I remember a fine Christian woman saying years ago publicly, "I do not want anyone to mistake me for a sinner." That

is the spirit that ought to animate us all and that will animate us if we are vigorous, courageous Christians.

Paul speaks of the conflict being waged; "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. The forces of evil beset every Christian. They are animated by an intense hatred of God. They cannot attack God directly; therefore they attack His children. There is a devil in the world. Verse 11 says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." According to this text, we shall be able to stand against him no matter if he may have power and use it in a wily way. One thing is sure—if we put on the armor of God and boldly face our foes, the outcome of the fight will be victory for us.

Many people fear the devil. The Bible does not say to fear him. It says, "Fear not." Many people have wrong ideas of the devil. They imagine he is almost if not quite as powerful as God. They imagine that he is everywhere at the same time. In other words, that he is infinite and omnipresent. He is finite; therefore like all other finite personalities—very limited in his powers. There are many evil angels—how many we do not know—but they also are finite creatures, evil, yet limited. Many people lose sight of the fact made plain in the Scriptures, that though the evil angels work against us and try to destroy us, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him" to protect and keep them.

The conflict is real, not only with the power of satan but with the evil influences that come from the unsaved people about us. We cannot but be influenced by these; therefore we must stand steadfast against them and overcome them.

Then, too, there are those things within ourselves that we must fight. Paul said, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." No matter how good Christians we become, we shall find within ourselves some troublesome things that will give us occasion to exercise our strength and courage. Full salvation takes all sin out of us, but it does leave our dispositions, our physical desires and the desires of the mind, to be brought into subjection and governed. All these things make life a battle. But it may be a winning, not a losing battle, all along the line of life. It will be a battle of victory if we do our part.

It is not God's will that a Christian be on the defensive all the time. He should not be cornered, fighting for his life. He should wage aggressive warfare against his many foes. God gives us offensive and defensive weapons sufficient that when we use them properly, we need fear no foe. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." II Corinthians 10:4. We do not use natural weapons, but since our foes are spiritual foes, we fight them with spiritual weapons. The "sword of the Spirit," we are told, is the Word of God. Jesus used it triumphantly against satan in the time of Jesus' temptation. It will often serve us to put our enemies to flight. Sometimes we can quote Scriptures as Jesus did. At other times we can use them as bulwarks of faith. We can anchor our faith in them.

Our mightiest weapon of all is faith. We are to "...fight the good fight of faith..." I Timothy 6:12. Paul fought a victorious fight all through life, and when nearing the end he said, "I have fought a good fight..." II Timothy 4:7. The writer of the Hebrew epistle has something to say about this warfare. He calls to remembrance "the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye

endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." Hebrews 10:32-33. Paul told Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier."

The life of a soldier, in many respects is a hard life. Likewise the life of a Christian has its hard elements in things to be endured, things that will try courage and endurance. But what are we—courageous Christians or cowards? What are we—people of spirit and vigorous manhood, or do we dwell in the caves of fear? No, we shall "quit ourselves like men." We shall be good soldiers of Christ Jesus.

But this fight is a fight of faith. It is through faith we conquer. Faith gives confidence. We must believe that we shall win. General Marion said of his men in the Revolution, "If I saw my men sitting up on their horses straight, with their heads up and with their eyes flashing, I knew I could attack a greatly superior force with certainty of success." Gideon's three hundred are examples of what all God's people should be. "Confidence is half of conquest, but only the first half." We must have confidence that we shall win; then we must do the things that bring victory. We must fight manfully. This we *can* do, and doing it we shall win.

A soldier's life does not consist altogether in fighting. Battles are fought only at intervals. There are things to be endured by a soldier besides the perils of battle. When Garibaldi led his troops to fight for the freedom of Italy, he stood before them and said, "I will give you hunger, wounds and death, but Italy shall be free." They followed him enthusiastically and won. If we have the love that endureth all things, we shall not be deterred by the comparatively few hardships of the Christian life. We shall have the courage to meet them and to go through them.

Before a soldier is ready for battle, he must be drilled. He must be taught to cooperate with others. So God puts us through the drilling process in life. Soldiers often get tired of their drills, nevertheless they must keep them up if they would be good soldiers. So the Christian must have the drill of the daily repetition of the little troublesome things of life. He must go through the various processes of becoming a soldier, and these drills must be kept up continually through life.

Sometimes in our Christian life we seem to be making no progress. We mark time. At other times we find it necessary to go upon the double-quick. We then realize we are making real progress. But running is often no more important than marking time. So whichever we are doing let us be content to obey our Commander.

Soldiers are often kept in garrisons. Frequently it is as important to hold some position without fighting as to be at the battlefront. Garrison duty often becomes irksome. In like manner there are irksome things in the Christian life. There is the daily recurrence of the same duties; things must be repeated over and over. Perhaps we cannot alway enter into these things with zest, but it is just as much a test of our loyalty and our soldierly qualities to do well the uninteresting things of life, the things that come again and again, the things we weary of, as to do those that interest us most.

Again, soldiers are often held in reserve. The battle is raging in front of them. They are doing nothing. Sometimes it is harder to be held in reserve than it is to fight. There are times when God lets us be in reserve. For a time at least we are inactive. We may not understand why. We may think we are useless; but not so. God is only waiting for the time when He can use us effectually. He is only waiting until He needs us for some definite thing.

It is important that we have soldierly qualities. The demand of a soldier's life is for the manifestation of the sterner side of his nature. The coward may make a pretty good soldier until he faces the enemy. Only the man of courage faces unfalteringly what may come. Therefore we have need of courage. The old song says,

*"Sure I must fight if I would win,
Increase my courage, Lord."*

Well, the Lord is ready to do that if we take the right course. How can we be courageous, even though we may not feel courageous? Marshal Foch said, "Don't stop to have any fear, but when you are sure that you are right approach the issue with confidence and fight and fight on until victory." Marshal Foch won enough victories to know how it is done. If we follow his advice, our victories will be won and we shall know no defeat.

Good soldiers do their part everywhere. They are not merely good soldiers when no enemies are in sight. They are ready, obedient, confident. Of one thing we can always be sure—we have a good General. We need fear no foe when we follow Him. We need fear nothing but that we may not properly follow Him. He requires nothing more than He ought to require. He leads us nowhere but where we ought to go. He goes forth "conquering and to conquer." Let us follow Him through life's conflict without fear, with the assurance that we shall be filled with His might, that we shall be kept by His protecting power, and that nothing shall by any means hurt us while we obey and trust Him.

The fact that there are dangers and hardships and wearisome toil in the army does not stifle its song. There are songs in the camp, songs on the march, songs in the battle and songs of victory. These songs differ. In

life we have the songs of the camp. There are songs for the quiet hour, songs of safety, songs of contentment, songs of a restful soul. There are songs of anticipation, of hope and of fellowship. These songs may gladden our hearts day by day even though we are in God's army, for God's army is a joyful army.

In life, there are songs of the march, songs of accomplishment, of endeavor, of determination. There are songs that make us forget our weariness. There are songs of the land that lies before us. Let us learn to sing these songs on the march so that, as we go onward in our Christian journey, it shall not be a dragging forward through the difficulties and sometimes darkness of the march, as through discouragements and fear; but looking beyond the things that surround us, we may see the end of our march and the great review after the campaign is over.

Then there are songs of the battle, songs of courage, of determination, songs of the power of our Leader, of His greatness, of His glory, and of His care of His soldiers. There are songs to encourage us, to create in us enthusiasm, to inspire us. There are songs that flow from the will to win. Let us learn to sing the songs of battle. They will help us on the Christian way. They will cause our foes to fear us.

And, finally, there are the songs of victory. These are the songs we all desire to sing. We may sing these songs in our anticipation of victory, but it is when the victory actually has been won that we can sing them from our hearts and have them mean something to us. These are ever glad songs, songs of rejoicing and triumph. The Christian life is a victorious life. It could not be victorious without battles. So we shall face its battles, march its marches, do our garrison duties, and whatever may come to us through the will of our Leader.

Then from time to time we shall sing the song of victory, and at last, when the war is over and we have laid down our weapons, join with those above in singing the grand hallelujah chorus of victory through all eternity.

CHAPTER XX

LEARNING TO SING

When the Psalmist had considered the goodness of the Lord and what it meant to mankind, he cried out, "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy..." Psalm 67:4. And the Lord through Isaiah said, "...My servants shall sing for joy of heart..." Isaiah 65:14. Jeremiah says, "...they shall come and sing in the height of Zion and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord....and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all." God not only meant this world to be a happy place, a place of gladness and song, but He has promised to put a new song in our mouths. Our heavenly Father, like a good earthly father, rejoices in the happiness of His children. He never intended this world to be a place of sorrow and care, of disappointment and wretchedness. He never meant it to be a vale of tears. It is only because the world has been separated from God that all these things have come. Sin has brought universal trouble. God will take away sin and bring universal song.

A child sings because he has the spirit of song in his heart. His singing may not be very melodious, he may not keep the tune nor the time; nevertheless the joy in his heart will bubble over. It is like this when we are saved from our sins. We are filled with a sense of God's goodness, and our souls begin to sing. Like the child, however, there are many things we must learn about singing. Many Christians sing much less with heart and voice than they might sing if they should learn how to sing properly. There is a secret about singing

that we learn partly by experience and partly by being taught. One of the best ways to learn to sing is to practice frequently. Many Christians do not practice singing. In other words they do not cultivate the elements in their souls that would lead to singing. On the contrary, they look on the side of life or at elements in life that tend to chill the source of song.

Light hearts do not come by accident, or at least their lightness does not depend upon accidental combination of circumstances. The song in the soul is the result of a proper attitude of the soul toward life and toward God. Therefore if we cultivate this attitude toward life, it will be to us a source of song, an inspiration of song. We sing when we are thinking about pleasant things. This attitude of mind is conducive to song. The song breaks forth spontaneously. In order therefore to have our hearts full of song, we must train ourselves to have the heart attitude from which song springs. We can train ourselves to have this attitude as well as to have the opposite attitude. Life under such circumstances will be much more pleasant and happy than if we continually look upon the dark side of things.

One necessary thing in singing is to get the proper pitch. If we are pitched too low, we may run below the range of our voice or at least not be heard much. If we are pitched too high, we may be thrown under serious strain to reach the tone. So it is important that we get the proper pitch, not only for our own sake but for those associated with us. In other words, we must have a right attitude toward life and correct views of duty, of our privileges and of what a wholesome, sane, balanced life is. We must have a proper sense of our relationship to the world in which we live. These things help us to be in harmony.

Harmony is one of the greatest elements of happiness, just as it is one of the most necessary elements of

song. Speaking of God's watchmen the prophet says, "Together shall they sing." The Psalmist said, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." We must get the discords out of our hearts and out of our voices and out of our relations. One discordant voice in a choir or in a congregation can spoil all the singing. I remember listening over the radio on a number of occasions to the services of a church where a man, standing near enough to the microphone to be readily heard, sang altogether out of tune with the congregation. He sang away apparently with all his might, and his voice stood out in sharp contrast to the voices of the other singers.

There are people who are out of harmony with their surroundings, out of harmony with the people with whom they associate. Their lives and their voices are discordant. There are some who are discordant only in certain things. They miss certain notes. It is highly important that we learn the art of adapting ourselves to people and to things. We have to get along with people and they have to get along with us, and if these relations are to be joyous, or even bearable, there must be a considerable degree of harmony. We must get rid of those discords that continually arise. Sometimes people make no effort to be harmonious. They go on their way, do as they please, and think as they please, independently of others. The Bible teaches us that "no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself." There must be an adjustment of lives to each other, and that adjustment must be such as will produce harmony. We should make a sincere effort to learn harmony—not merely musical harmony, but soul harmony.

We must learn to adjust ourselves to our circumstances in a way that creates the greatest possible harmony. If we are always at war with our circumstances

and our environment, we shall be constantly irritated, disturbed and uncomfortable in mind and soul. If we do not find through adjustment a way to be at peace with our circumstances and our environment, we shall have many a chafed spot to burn and pain. We must learn to have an ointment for the chafed spots, and we must learn how to apply it to make it effectual. Patience, submission and forbearance in equal parts, well mixed, make an excellent ointment. The machinery of life will sometimes get hot bearings. We need plenty of the oil of grace. This will stop the friction. There are ways of avoiding friction with people and friction with circumstances. There are ways of avoiding discord.

One necessary thing is to keep in time with others. Soldiers must keep step; otherwise they are a rabble rather than an army. In like manner we must keep step with others. I have frequently listened in to church services where the song leader kept just about half a beat ahead of his congregation. He was all the time trying to hurry them up. I thought it a poor means of doing so. It spoiled the music for me. We may spoil the music of life for some people in a similar way. At the same time we are spoiling it for ourselves. So in life's song let us keep in time. Let us avoid discord, and let us sing with all our hearts.

Religion is harmony. It is harmony with God and harmony with man. It is harmony with whatever is right everywhere. Life's harmonies are based on right relations. It is our privilege to have right relations with God, relations that satisfy us and relations that satisfy God. This is not an extreme statement. Thousands of people have this experience daily. They know the peace and joy and satisfaction that come from such relations. There can be no true happiness when one has not proper relations with others. If those relations are full

of discord, disagreement and inharmonies, life must be lived on a plane far below its possibilities.

There is need of harmony within ourselves. Many people are torn with conflicting emotions, with conflicting desires and conflicting purposes. They have conflicting experiences. There is conflict in the soul, conflict in the mind, and this often results in disharmony in the body. We should carefully study ourselves to see where our discords are located. We should then set about removing these discords, getting ourselves into tune. We should create harmonious relations within ourselves, instead of allowing the inharmonies that exist to persist.

To a very large extent we can have harmonious relations with others. There are some people who are not harmonious, with whom we must have relations. They are not willing to be in harmony with us or with others. We should strive earnestly that on our part there shall be no disharmony. We should have no attitude of disharmony toward them, no feelings of disharmony, no disregard of their rights. On our part, there can be the elements of harmony without respect to what is on their part.

It is God's earnest desire and purpose to be in harmony with all His creatures. He will do everything in His power to bring us into harmony with Himself. There is always a way for us to come into harmony with Him, and this is not a difficult way if we just take the right way. This right way we can learn from God more readily than from any other source.

Harmony produces a life worth living. In fact, the happiness of heaven results from its harmony. This is true of the home, of the church, of the neighborhood, of the nation. The Psalmist said, "As for me, I am for peace." Peace is harmony. Jesus said, "Blessed are the

peacemakers." If we have in our hearts the attitude of a peacemaker, if we strive earnestly for concord, we shall be happy. There will be things in life we cannot help, things that are unpleasant, some things that are hurtful, some things that must be endured; but these need not destroy the harmonies in our souls nor the harmonies of our joyous song nor the harmonies of our relation with everything else (except these particular things that cause trouble.) We can shut these things up into a limited area of our nature and not permit them to permeate all our being. We can restrict them to the space that circumstances actually demand and keep the rest of our life free.

One important thing to observe is that we do not flat the tones. There is a natural disposition in many singers to fall below the pitch in singing. Thus they get out of harmony with those who keep the pitch. Or if it is a leader who gets out of pitch, all the singers will soon be out of pitch. There is a tendency to fall below the standards we have set for ourselves. There is always the tendency to deteriorate in our spiritual lives. In other words there is a tendency to flat the tones. It is needful therefore that we frequently compare the pitch of our lives with the pitch pipe or the tuning fork that gives the correct pitch.

We shall never be like God in greatness and majesty and power. We shall ever be finite and have our faults and failings. Nevertheless we can keep our lives in tune with the infinite. We can have the tones of divine love, truth and mercy abounding in our lives; and thus the rich and splendid harmonies of heavenly music will be sounding in our hearts and in our lives, and their tones will inspire those about us to high and holy things that will start the heavenly melodies ringing in them also.

CHAPTER XXI

SINGING IN SAFETY

When God established Israel in Canaan, He had seven cities of refuge appointed. In the event of certain things occurring, those who had been the cause of them might flee into one of these cities of refuge. No matter how many enemies such a person had or how intent the enemies were on taking his life, they dare not disturb him within the bounds of the city of refuge. If he went out of that city he did so at his own peril.

Jesus Christ is our city of refuge. In Him we are ever safe. Out of Him there is no safety. The wise man said, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Proverbs 18:10. After the Lord had delivered David from all his enemies he said, "...The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; thou savest me from violence." II Samuel 22:2-3.

These figures of speech are not merely poetic imagery. They express a great truth. God *is* our refuge and strength, a present help in time of trouble. He is exactly what these scriptures represent Him to be. He is not a God afar off who cares nothing for our prosperity or safety. He is not bound by the chains of His own laws so that He is unable to do anything for us. He is not unwilling to help us in our times of need. No, He is truly our strong tower, into which we may run and be safe. Those who obey and trust Him *are* safe. He does not promise His help and then neglect to give it. He

does not raise expectations of safety in us only to disappoint us in the hour of peril. No, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." He takes away the fear because He takes away the danger. It is written, "...Whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." Proverbs 29:25. Through Hosea God said, "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely." Hosea 2:18. This is a figurative language, but it expresses a great truth. No matter who are our enemies, no matter what threatens us, God will master the situation. He will make His people to lie down safely in a safe place, secure in His unfailing care.

When we feel we are safe from all our enemies, when we feel we are protected most amply, when we believe there is nothing at all to cause us concern, we can sing in safety. It is thus that God would have us sing in our Christian life. He would have us with that confidence in Him which trusts Him unfalteringly. He would have us believe that in His care we are safe.

Being safe and having the assurance of our safety are two altogether different things. We may feel safe when we are in great danger if we are ignorant of that danger. We may be concerned for our safety when there is no danger, if we are unaware of our safety. It is important then that we know whether or not we are safe. When are we safe? When we are trusting in God. When we are obeying Him. When we are in His care. But many who are truly in His care and who might lie down in safety and whose hearts might be free from anxiety or any sense of disturbing care are disturbed and troubled and filled with forebodings that are altogether needless.

No matter how safe we may be, we cannot feel safe unless we believe we are safe. As long as we question our safety, there can be no feeling of security. As long as we question God's care of us, we shall feel insecure. It is necessary therefore that we believe God's promises of our safety; that we cease to question them altogether. We should rely upon them without fear. When we repose implicit confidence in His Word, we may have a sense of safety in His protecting care and realize there is a wall of His love about us that cannot be penetrated by any enemy.

With this attitude of heart, questioning is lost in trust. A sense of security brings comfort and rest. The writer of the old song expressed his confidence, that though his Father has many dear children to look after, "He will never forget to keep me." That is the attitude of faith. That is the attitude of heart out of which we can sing in safety. This blessed secret of trust is the *Secret of the Singing Heart*, and until we have learned this and put it into practice, we cannot sing the song of restful trust; we cannot sing from a heart undisturbed.

We should cultivate a sense of our security by considering that we are secure. We should reject all feelings of insecurity, because they are based on groundless fears. So many of us cultivate our fears. We develop a sense of insecurity by continually questioning our safety. We cultivate feelings we do not desire to have and then wonder why we have them. We cultivate a sense of insecurity by letting our minds dwell upon the possibility of insecurity, by considering the dangers that may threaten us and the possibility of evil that lies in things.

We should do just the opposite of this—cultivate a sense of security by considering God's faithfulness and

by familiarizing ourselves with His promises, by considering how great He is and the marvelous power He can exert and the great love He has that will naturally cause Him to exert this great power to keep us safely. We may feel safe, or we may feel unsafe, *as we choose*. Some Christians are always troubled and worried about what is going to happen, while others rest in God and worry not in the least for the future. It is a different attitude of mind; that is all. We can have whichever attitude we cultivate.

When we trust we are carefree. When we are care-free the song will rise of trust and confidence. One who had this experience wrote,

*"I no trouble and no sorrow
See today, nor will I borrow
Gloomy visions of the morrow,
In my Jesus all is bright."*

We might suppose that the author of these lines was a man whose life had been carefully guarded from trouble. We might suppose he had never known sorrow nor care, that he knew nothing of persecutions. On the contrary, he was a man who suffered many things. He had been bitterly persecuted. He had suffered heart-breaking sorrow. He had been misrepresented and maligned. The tenderest ties of affection had been rudely broken. He had known bitter poverty. Yet in all these things his soul had triumphed, and when I knew him in the last year of his life, I found him one of the most joyous Christians I had ever known.

It is the privilege of every Christian to live in the one hundred twenty-first Psalm. It is entitled "The Great Safety of the Godly Who Put Their Trust in God's Protection." Get your Bible and read it. Read it over and

over; then let your soul establish itself in it, to abide in its security. Peter tells us we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation...” I Peter 1:5. No doubt you have noticed how again and again we are led back to faith. We are kept through faith. If we are to be kept, we must exercise faith. We must believe that God will keep us and trust Him to do so. Faith is the most prominent element in the Christian life, and the most important element. Every road in the Scriptures leads to faith.

Continuing, Peter tells us how we are kept—“Ready to be revealed in the last time.” Kept in readiness for God’s coming. Kept in readiness to meet the great judgment day with joy; in readiness to welcome our Lord’s return. Yes, kept ready day by day for whatever the future holds for us; preserved by God’s power from evil.

There is another sense in which we are kept through faith. A fort is kept by a garrison. God places a garrison in us so the citadel of our soul may be kept inviolate. We are made partakers of His holiness, of His goodness, of His love, His mercy, His peace and many other things. He Himself dwells in us in a very real sense. Thus we are garrisoned and defended against all attackers.

Faith also works to help us hold on to God. Some people are fearful that their hold upon Him will be broken. They feel as though they were hanging over a chasm of uncertainties and dangers, and only by holding on with their utmost strength can they hope to escape disaster. The real facts are illustrated by an incident that I once observed. A father took his little daughter by the arms and lifted her from the floor. She grabbed frantically at his arms with her hands and held on as hard as she could, fearing that he would let her fall. Seeing her fear he relaxed his grasp sufficiently to throw most of her weight upon her hands. She held tightly for a few

moments, then her strength began to fail. She cried, "O Papa, Papa, I'll fall, I'll fall." Her father only smiled. Her grasp soon began to relax, and she lost her hold with both hands, but she did not fall. Her father held her as tightly as before. She had been at no time in danger of falling.

So God holds us. Our strength may not enable us to hold on to Him securely. Sometimes we may feel our grasp upon Him slipping. It may seem that we shall certainly fall. But we do not fall. His hands still hold us. We are safe in the midst of our fears. Ah, soul, do not be afraid; God will not let you go. He will hold fast to you with those great strong arms of His. His hold will never slip. Do not trust your own faith to hold on to Him. Hold as you can, but rely upon Him to hold you. Do not attempt to rely upon yourself to hold all your weight. He does not expect it. He does not wish it. He wants the satisfaction of holding you and having you have confidence enough in Him to be unafraid but secure in your safety.

God's ways are not our ways. Sometimes God's wisdom rather than His power protects us. He can make great barriers of trifles. The story is told of Felix of Uola and his followers who, when fleeing from their pursuers took refuge in a cave. Just after they entered, a spider spun a web across the opening. The pursuers coming along glanced toward the cave but, noticing the spider's web across the opening, decided no one had entered there, so marched on. After they had passed out of sight Felix and his men came out. When he saw the spider's web, Felix said, "With God, a spider's web is an army. Without God, an army is but a spider's web."

One thing we must learn—when God takes us out of trouble, or when He comforts and sustains us in our troubles, we must do nothing to bring trouble back upon

us. We must let past things be past things. The following illustration points out a lesson we all need to learn: "A Christian lady had passed through some trouble, and the Lord at the proper time had comforted her. But later she got to thinking over the thing again and began to feel bad over it. Then the Lord said to her, 'I comforted you over this once; now if you go to thinking it over again, you will have to bear it yourself.'"

Many of us go back into the past to bring up troubles through which we have been brought and sorrows over which we have been comforted. With these we spoil the present. With these we crush the song of joy that would otherwise spring up in our hearts. Let us not act so unwisely.

Living today, trusting God for today, realizing His care today and letting yesterday and tomorrow look after the things that belong to them, we may realize the security of our souls in God, and out of that sense of security we can sing songs of triumph and abounding joy.

CHAPTER XXII

SINGING IN ADVERSITY

Life has its adversities. It must need have them. Adversity, pain, sorrow and disappointment are the lathe upon which God shapes us. They are the emery wheel that grinds and smooths us. They are the polishing wheel that makes us shine. If we can never be happy until we are so situated that nothing which exists may tend to render us unhappy, we shall have little happiness in life. Happiness does not come from a life of ease and indolence. It is not the result of the absence of obstacles and difficulties. Happiness comes from triumphing over them. Therefore the song of true happiness often arises from the soul that undergoes many adversities.

Paul understood what life must be. He went through the cities of Asia after he had been stoned and left for dead, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14:22. He enumerated the things he suffered in his work for Christ. Doubtless you have read that list again and again. Notwithstanding all this, no one has more to say about rejoicing, being filled with joy, and singing the songs of victory than does this same sufferer of tribulations.

The Psalmist also knew about tribulations. He said, "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities." Psalm 31:7. God did not leave him to himself in his tribulations. Being conscious of this, he could

rejoice. Jesus said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulations." Did He say, "Mourn and weep because of this?" Did He intimate that they should shrink from them? Did He indicate there was something wrong in them that brought these tribulations? Not so. He had already told them that the world would hate them. Now He showed them that as a result of that hatred of the world and also as the result of natural conditions in life, they should have tribulations. Did He say to them, "This will take away much from your happiness; you will be sad and disconsolate much of the time; you will sorrow on account of these tribulations; it is too bad you are to have them?" No; He said nothing of this kind. He told them plainly what was to come; then added, "But be of good cheer—I have overcome the world."

Think of the boldness of Jesus in saying this. Just before Him lay Gethsemane. Just beyond that, the trials before the high priest and Pilate, and Calvary awaited Him. He knew this very well. He knew He must pass through the bitterest of tribulations. Nevertheless He said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

What a wonderful example for us this is. He has overcome the world not merely for Himself, but for us as well. As the Psalmist pointed out, He knows our adversities. He knows that lying ahead of us there are adversities and difficulties, perhaps dangers, sorrows and many things to try the soul. He also knows when we are in those things, when they are pressing hard upon us, when we are tempted to bow down our heads and give up. He knows exactly how we feel, how things seem, how the future looks, how the present troubles us. In spite of it all, He is saying to us, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome."

Dear soul, Jesus knows all about your troubles. He knows every heartache, every difficulty, everything you must overcome, everything you must bear. Trusting in His grace, relying upon His help, you shall soon find your heart filling again with melody, for the clouds will pass away.

Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Then he adds, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:35, 37.

Speaking of our acceptance with God and our justification by faith through grace, Paul says we "...rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:2. But are the good things of God all in which we can rejoice? No, for he continues, "And not only so but we glory in tribulations also."

Paul could rejoice in the bad things as well as in the good things. Why could he do this? Was he a mere enthusiast? Was he a man who shut his eyes to the facts? No, he was sober minded, consistent and sane. He looked behind the frowning face of circumstances. He saw the results that follow tribulations. He set them down for us that we might consider them and rejoice with him. "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

That was the secret of Paul's rejoicing. The verses just quoted are put in a more understandable and better way in the American Standard Version, "We also rejoiced in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness and stedfastness approvedness and approvedness hope and hope putteth not to shame because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts."

Again Paul tells his experience in II Corinthians 7:4: "...I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." He tells why this is: "...God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us..." II Corinthians 7:6. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation..." II Corinthians 1:4. The comfort of God is wonderful. The satisfying, soul-delighting blessedness of it can be known only by those who have gone deeply into the waters of tribulation. So many, in time of trouble, are prone to feel that God does not care for them or that they have offended Him. Just when they need Him most, and just when He would be most ready to help, they cease to seek that help and feel they must meet their difficulties in their own strength without the help they so much crave.

Right here many are tempted to give up trying. They feel they are unable to overcome or to endure through to better days. They feel that God has forsaken them in their hour of need. Their feelings and their attitude shut them off from the help that God would delight to give them. It is just here that we need to face things squarely. We need to consider God as He is. We need to take a right view of our relations with Him. In the time of the child's need, a true and loving parent yearns with sympathy and with an earnest desire to help. The heart of God is more tender than the heart of a mother. His love is stronger than any human love. In these times of tribulation and trouble, of sorrow or care, of anxiety or foreboding, we should remember that He is waiting to take us into His arms and to comfort us with that comfort which only He can give.

The clouds may seem to hide His face; He may seem far off: but He is not far off. The clouds may prevent us from seeing Him, but they do not prevent His seeing us. He *does* see us, and He desires us to turn to Him

for that partnership in trouble which we need in order that the load may be borne. He desires that we confide in Him, that we pour out our soul's bitterness and longing to Him. He expects us to act as men and women should act. He expects us to use what strength we have. But beyond and above our strength is His abundant strength and help, ready to supply whatever deficiency there may be in us. He always sees the way out of our difficulties. He always knows just how much grace we must have. He always measures out to us the needed supply when we give Him opportunity.

No one ever lived, whether he be a Christian or not, but who has had his times of discouragement, heaviness, sorrow and disappointment. Care and anxiety come to all. Unsaved people have to bear their own burdens, meet their own adversities and suffer their own sorrows, without divine help. They get through them in some way in their own strength, and we could do the same without divine help. There would always be a way that we should get through somehow. But God knows a better way than we know, and He will help us into that better way. He will give us the strength and fortitude necessary if we only trust and go forward courageously.

James tells us to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. There is a way to do this. That way is the way Paul took. Paul looked behind the tribulations to the outcome. James exhorts us to do likewise. These tribulations all are fruitful. They are good for us. If we bear them as we should, we shall look back upon them presently and rejoice that God let them come.

Let us now look at Paul. It was midnight. He and Silas lay in a Philippian dungeon. Their feet were fast in the stocks. Their clothes were rent; their backs were bleeding from the many stripes that had been lain upon

them. It seemed that death might be only a little ahead of them. Under these unfavorable circumstances they did not lament; they prayed. (Acts 16:25.) After they had prayed, they did something else—they sang praises to God. They did not do this for mere bravado. They did not do it to keep the other prisoners awake. They did it because of the joy that was welling up in their own hearts. They were suffering so they could not sleep; so they spent the time in the very best possible manner. They spent not a moment in regretting what had happened. They did look for the needed help. Their faith reached out to God and help came. Their souls were filled with joyful praises, and they sang from full hearts.

There were reasons why they could do this. First, they were innocent. They had a consciousness that they had done nothing wrong. They had been trying to do good. Now they were suffering for it. There is great comfort in being innocent under such circumstances or in any circumstance. A clear conscience inspires to song. So if our conscience is clear, we can rise above our circumstances if we follow the course taken by Paul and Silas.

Second, they were hopeful Christians. They did not look on the dark side. They looked beyond the present suffering and the threatening circumstances. They saw not the dungeon nor the stocks nor the executioner's sword. They felt not their galled ankles nor their smarting backs. They looked to God. They saw His approving smile; and they sang praises.

Third, they exercised definite faith. They believed God knew all about their circumstances. They believed they were in His care. They believed nothing could come to them without coming through His will, by His permission. So they rested in full assurance of faith in Him and in their tribulations sang joyfully. Paul taught

others to rejoice, and he set them an example. If we face our adversities as he faced his, we too may sing in adversity.

In adversity we sing a different song than we do when we are untroubled. We must join courage to trust. When we do this, we can sing songs of confidence born of our confidence in God's help. We can sing songs of trust that allay our fears. We can sing songs of anticipation as we look forward to the victories that lie before us and at the crown at the end of the road. We can sing in joyful remembrance of God's former mercies.

The songs of adversity are more difficult to learn than the songs we sing when everything is going pleasantly and prosperously, but these songs are no less joyous in the depths of the heart when they spring from faith. In fact they can often be more truly joyous than the songs of prosperity because they go deeper into the depths of the heart and rise with fuller trust. But no matter how many tribulations we have, if we trust God we may be "exceeding joyful" in all those tribulations.

CHAPTER XXIII

SINGING IN QUIETNESS

No life is so sheltered but it has times of distress and difficulty and oftentimes of conflict and turmoil. But no life need be so full of these that there is no time for quietness. No one fights all the time. No one works all the time. For every soul, there is a time for withdrawal from all the intensely active things of life, a time to rest in quietness.

Life in this age is intense. People live so much in the public that many feel they have no time for quietness. Others are so disturbed in their minds and so constantly under a strain; they are so continually facing real or imaginary difficulties that they have no rest of spirit. God does not want us to miss the quiet side of life. He wants us to be able to sing the songs of quietness that differ from all other songs. Before we can sing these songs we must become quiet and enter into a place of restfulness.

Here is a promise: "Whoso harkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Proverbs 1:33. Isaiah, the prophet of the coming gospel age, said of this age: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Isaiah 32:17-18. It is our privilege to have this blessed experience.

The effect of righteousness is certain. It does not bring turmoil nor anxiety, but quietness and assurance. The first thing to make sure of, therefore, is that

we are righteous. We may count ourselves unrighteous, or we may count ourselves righteous. The important thing is—how does God count us? If we have been saved by His grace, if we have been washed from our sins in the precious blood of His dear Son, if we have been born again, we are righteous. If we are living in obedience to God to the best of our understanding, if we are living lives of humility and trust, sincerely endeavoring to do His will, we are righteous.

There is a difference between being righteous and being perfect. None of us will attain such a perfection in this world that we have no faults nor shortcomings to be overcome. But righteousness, first imparted by God in salvation, is preserved as long as we preserve an attitude of submission to Him, with a sincere purpose in our hearts to obey Him and the desire to please Him as the ruling motive in our lives. But in order to have quietness and assurance in our lives from righteousness, we must believe that we are righteous. We must not always be questioning ourselves, always looking for flaws in ourselves, putting ourselves on the rack of torture. We must be fair to ourselves. We must have faith in ourselves. Then we can dwell in a peaceable habitation and in a quiet resting place.

Care, anxiety and fearfulness are not from God. He has said, "I will give you rest." Many people do not become quiet long enough to rest. Sometimes people get where they feel they must be doing something all the time. Activity is proper, but in a certain state of the nerves when we are under a certain tension, we cannot sit down and be quiet. We have a constant impulse toward activity. I have known people who had to be compelled to sit down and sit quietly for a considerable time until their nerves relaxed. They had entirely lost control

of themselves so that, without the restraining force of another will, they were unable to be quiet or to relax.

Sometimes we get into a similar condition spiritually. There is a continual inner urge, a something that cannot be satisfied. The Lord sometimes says to us, "Be still and know that I am God." We become agitated and bothered. We worry and fret. We suffer a thousand fears of present and future ills and troubles. We need to come to quietness before God and to see Him as He is and to submit to His will without reserve. Straining and struggling come from rebellion. Submission is the cure for this. If your life is in a turmoil, God's promise of rest is not being fulfilled in you. It is not God's fault. You are not giving Him a chance. You may have that rest of soul by deliberately turning away from the thing that prevents your rest and diligently seeking the way that leads to quietness and peace.

Perhaps you need to disengage yourself from various things in your life. Perhaps you are frequently engaged in useless and profitless activities. Perhaps you do not give any time to the cultivation of quietness. Quietness is something that must be learned. We need to learn how to say effectively to our spirit, as Jesus said to the waters, "Peace be still." We need to learn how to relax our attention, to withdraw from our anxieties. We should learn to practice going into the secret closet, shutting the door, closing everything out but God. We read in the Scriptures of "the secret place of the Most High." A writer said, "The secret place of the Most High is ever still, and if we dwell there, our hearts will not be disturbed by any tumult without."

There is a way into this secret place. The strange thing about that way is that each of us must find it for himself. Most of us who do not find it do not look for it intently enough. We seem too busy to do this. We should

like to be in God's secret place, but we assume that under our circumstances we cannot be there. There is a road, a short road, from wherever we are, into God's secret place; that secret place of quietness and rest where He would commune with us and where our hearts can grow tranquil. God wishes His people to be tranquil. Tranquillity brings calmness and peace. Someone said, "Inward tranquillity of spirit is calm, because it is fixed on God and filled with love." Sweethearts love to be alone. It is their enjoyment of each other when undisturbed that is sweetest. Our loving communion with God, to satisfy God and to satisfy, us must be alone with Him in His secret place.

The tempestuous surge of emotions must be quelled. The tumult of spirit must be brought to quietness. Only then may we enter into that tender fellowship and delightful association with the Lord that it is His will for all Christians to have. W. G. Murray crowds a great deal of truth into a few words when he says, "Inner serenity becomes outward strength." We sometimes wonder why some Christians are so sure of themselves, why there is such a sense of sufficiency to meet what may come. We wonder why they meet their circumstances with so little trepidation. In the midst of most severe tests, they are serene and strong. The prophet said, "In quietness and in confidence is your strength." We should give heed to learning this lesson.

We can cultivate a tranquil habit of mind. In Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God, it is said of the living creatures, "...When they stood, they let down their wings." Ezekiel 1:24. I once got a wonderful lesson from this saying. I stood upon a hilltop looking down into a valley. As I watched, a number of turkey buzzards alighted in the valley below me. Instead of folding their wings as birds usually do, they stood with them outstretched,

looking about as though fearful of being attacked by something. They stood, ready instantly to spring into the air. They made me think of many Christians who hold this attitude in their lives.

We should learn to let down our wings. We should learn how to rest. There may be clouds, even threatening clouds upon the horizon of our lives. For the time being, our sky may be entirely covered and their shadows darken the landscape as far as we can see. It takes only a small cloud to produce this effect. We may be tempted to think the whole earth is covered with shadow. We may let gloom sink into our souls. We should not do this. We should remember the truth expressed by Mrs. Browning, "the blue of heaven is larger than the clouds." Tell yourself this over and over when you are tempted to be discouraged, and remember that God has a way for you so that your heart may be quiet and free from fear of evil.

We have a place of refuge, and that place of refuge is a quiet place, a place of safety and rest. A man was walking in the woods when he heard dogs baying. Presently a fawn appeared in sight. When it saw him, it ran up to him and fell down at his feet and looked appealingly into his face. He fought off the dogs, took the fawn home and raised it for a pet. If we should run to God in our troubles in life as confidently as that little fawn ran to the man, and appeal to God, He would beat off our enemies and take us into a place of safety, calmness and rest. We should have the simple faith that Whittier expresses in the lines,

*"I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."*

So often people ask, "How shall I get through the things that are ahead of me? How shall I endure this?" The way to go through is to trust through. What do we do when we trust? What do you do when you trust the bank with your money? You just go about your business without worrying in the slightest degree as to the safety of your money. When you trust a friend, you rely upon that friend. You do not question him. You believe in his loyalty to you. You take it for granted that everything will be all right between you. You do not expect anything unworthy of his friendship. You repose utmost confidence in him. It does not occur to you to question. You rest in full assurance in your friend or in your bank.

Trust removes every tendency to be disturbed. That is just the result when you trust God in that simple way. You rely upon Him. You take it for granted that things will be all right because you are God's, and God is looking after you. Your interests are safe in His hands, and therefore they *must* come out all right. Trusting Him thus you enter into the rest of faith and from that rest of faith you sing the songs of quietness and of confident assurance.

The songs we sing in quietness are not the songs of battle, not the songs of the army camp, not the songs of the march. They are the songs of holy fellowship, of divine comradeship. They are the songs of the satisfied soul. Let us therefore adopt that attitude of soul—toward ourselves, toward God and life and all it may hold—that will bring us into the quietness and rest and tranquillity of the secret place of the Most High. Let us learn to sing the songs of quiet rejoicing, the songs of those who lie down beside the still waters.

CHAPTER XXIV

SINGING IN ACTIVITY

Activity is a law of life. Life in the body continues only so long as there is activity of function. Soul rest does not imply stagnation. Rest is the result of the soul's attitude toward, and relations with, the spiritual, mental and physical universe. It is its adaptation to other things that produces harmony, and prevents discord and friction.

When the machinery of life is well oiled, it is smooth running. It is not needful that we withdraw ourselves from the activities of life, to shut ourselves up in a convent or cloister, in order to have soul rest. We can mingle in life's activities, we can fully do our part and yet have that inner rest that brings calmness, peace and satisfaction. These qualities are not the result of inactivity. They are not the result of death, but of life, and often the most active and vigorous life is the one that is most restful. Activity begets a mental attitude that naturally bursts forth into song. It produces soul vigor as it does mental and physical vigor. Vigor creates energy. Energy finds its normal expression in activity. Activity produces satisfaction and gratification. These are expressed in rejoicing.

Lack of activity is often the source of many troubles. Lack of proper physical exercise causes the muscles to grow flabby, the various bodily functions to grow sluggish and creates a disposition toward further inactivity. It is also the cause of many diseases. It weakens the body and leaves it a prey to destroying germs. The man who does not use his mental faculties so as to

keep them keen comes to the place where he does not want to think, where it is a real task for him to think and where he will not think if he can avoid it.

The same laws apply to the spiritual being. The less active we are in spiritual things, the less inclined we are to be active. The longer we are inactive, the less power to be active we have. A great many people are weak and powerless Christians because they are inactive Christians. They are unable to meet the difficulties of life and to overcome them readily because of the weakness induced by their lack of spiritual exercise. Everyone of us should be active. It is the only way to develop spiritual vigor and strength. It is the only way to be a happy, rejoicing Christian.

Our activities, however, should be of a proper sort. There are many religious activities that are useful, helpful and that build up and strengthen and bring out all our good qualities and develop them into Christian manhood and womanhood. There are other religious activities that produce an evil effect. That which places the body under an undue strain in any direction, that which uses up too much nervous energy, that which robs the body of its vitality, always results in hurt to the body.

In like manner, whatever religious activities injure the soul should be carefully avoided. Religious excitement, extremism, unbalanced enthusiasm and similar things, such as we see in some religious movements today, are distinctly hurtful to the soul. These have an effect upon the soul such as stimulants have upon the body. There must always be a reaction from them. That reaction is distinctly hurtful. We should see to it therefore that our religious activities are wise activities, not the result of fanaticism or extremism, not unbridled enthusiasm or animal excitement. Our activities should

be sane, moderate, reasonable and within the bounds of Christian propriety.

There is nothing that will give zest to life like a great purpose. Too many lives merely drift. When we look back through history to the rejoicing Christians outstanding on its pages we see the truly happy people were the ones who were inspired with a consuming purpose to accomplish something. Jesus went about doing good. He was under the urge of a great love. Notwithstanding all the opposition of those who should have been His helpers, He rejoiced in spirit. Jesus was devoted to an ideal. That ideal was to uplift and save men. In the strength of that ideal, He never faltered.

You and I need such an ideal in our lives. We, too, need the urge of a great love, a love for humanity. There are a multitude of opportunities around us for activities in doing good. The heart of the world is longing for a word of love and comfort, for kindly deeds, for helpfulness and mercy. What are we doing to supply this need? How much of devotion have we in our lives? Let us note the devotion of Paul. He poured himself out to people, not only in his own nation, but to strangers, to those who had no natural claim upon him. He counted not his life dear unto himself that he might accomplish the great purpose that inspired him. It was his activity, ceaseless and self-forgetful, that enabled him to be exceeding joyful in all his tribulations. It was that very activity that made him joyful.

Drifting always becomes monotonous. We may enjoy it for a time, but if we want really to enjoy ourselves, we must "get our backs into it." There is a great difference between being weary as a result of labor and the feeling of weariness that comes from idleness. When I was growing up, I lived in the country. Sunday was usually a weary day. I longed for its passing that I might

get to work again, not because I cared so much for work but because mere idleness and inactivity could give no satisfaction to my youthful spirit. When one is weary from labor, he can rest and enjoy resting. When one is weary from idleness, rest has no charms.

Many weary Christians are weary from idleness. They let the days pass and perhaps use but a few moments, if any time at all, for spiritual development or exercise. They know there are unsaved people all around them, but they do nothing about it. They know there are sick to be visited, but they do not visit them. They find a convenient excuse for their idleness just as every physical idler can find.

They know there are sorrowing hearts that need comforting and the poor that need ministering to. There are scores of opportunities all about them, but they are not using them. Then they wonder why they do not make more spiritual progress, why their life is not more blessed. They wonder why they have so many trials and difficulties to meet and why they seem to have no spiritual energy.

They need not wonder. They know very well that should they do the same physically as they are doing spiritually, what results would be. Why then should they be in doubt as to the cause of their spiritual state? So many say, "Oh, if I had more joy in my Christian life!" We may as well say, "Why do not we have more to eat on our tables?" when we refuse to spend money to buy it.

We can sing the joyous song of the reapers if we are a reaper. We can rejoice in accomplishments if we accomplish something. But accomplishment means definite activity, properly directed. A great many people are very active in religious work, or what they suppose to be religious work, which is really not religious work.

What do the things we do amount to from a spiritual standpoint? We could dispense with some things and be very little the losers and in many instances gain much.

Real religious activities are activities that use the spiritual, not the mere physical faculties and powers. They are things we get our hearts and our souls into, from a spiritual angle. Real spiritual activity is entering into the needs in a helpful way, comforting those who need comfort, ministering to the poor and the needy, applying balm to wounded spirits, encouraging the discouraged, helping wherever help is needed. These are spiritual activities that will start the song of joy in our own soul.

When we throw light upon the darkened pathway of a fellow traveler, that light is reflected upon our own pathway. When we minister to others, we are ministered to. When we bring joy to them, joy comes to our own hearts. But the trivialities with which so many religious people occupy themselves can never bring real soul satisfaction.

Another thing to note is that it is not the greatness of our labors but their purpose, the earnestness that we put into them and the quality of our own desires that make them worthwhile in results. It is not the greatness of what we do but the spirit we put into the doing. We may never have opportunities such as some others have; we may never have a place of importance or authority. This need not, in the least, hinder us from being as active as those who have more responsibilities and seemingly more or greater opportunities. If we make the most of our opportunities, whatever they are, we shall be happy. It is not how great the vessel but how much of ourselves that we put into it. It is not how great the opportunity but how greatly we rise to it. It is

not so much what others think of what we do or how great it may appear in their eyes; it is how much unselfish devotion we put into the doing of it.

Devotion to a worthwhile cause always has abundant reward. Here is the *Secret of the Singing Heart*. If you will learn this secret and put it into practice, you may have a heart that naturally breaks forth into song from the inward pressure of joy, as the safety valve of a boiler blows off every now and then under the pressure of the steam. The pressure of the steam depends upon the fire; so the heat and energy of devotion and love in our souls may be fervent enough to produce constantly recurring and overflowing songs.

Some, in their imagination, picture heaven as a place of rest. They think we shall sit around and play on golden harps or leisurely stroll over golden streets. That is not my idea of heaven. I believe the law of life in heaven will be the same as it is upon earth, that is, that activity of a constructive kind will be necessary to happiness. I do not know what heaven is like. No doubt it is inexpressibly glorious, but my faculties are so limited in this world, my activities so bound up by restrictions and limitations of the body, that my soul longs for the opportunity for greater expansion of its powers.

There are boundless possibilities for development in every human being. There will be opportunities for this development in the world to come. That development will mean activity, not useless activity, but productive activity. It has been written of that world, "His servants shall serve Him." The golden harps will sound and the singers will sing in heaven, not because they are resting, not because they have nothing else to do, but because they are giving expression to those joys that have come from their heavenly activities. After all, the harps and the singing, the golden streets, the gates

of pearls, are only figures. They stand for spiritual realities that mean far more than are expressed in these feeble figures. We shall rest from our labors of this world, not in inactivity, but in action. Very often in this life, the best sort of rest is activity of a different sort. Let us remember that whether in earth or heaven, the song of joy is born of activity.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HEAVENLY PLACES

“A devout Scotchman, being asked if he ever expected to go to heaven answered, ‘Why man, I live there.’” Heaven is not alone a place far distant, a place of which we know very little and to which we hope to go some day when this life is over. Heaven is something that may be enjoyed here and now. “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ....and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-6.

Too many people put off their enjoyment of another life and do not expect much of it in this life. It is our privilege to enjoy heaven now. At it is often said, “We can have a heaven to go to heaven in.” It is true that many persons who speak of this refer only to superficial emotions, outbursts of rejoicing, leading to physical demonstrations and the like. These things may have a certain value, but they are not the things referred to in the text mentioned. Living in heaven here means something far deeper, richer and more glorious than mere emotions, however joyful for the moment emotions may be.

Living in heaven is a reality. It was a reality to Jesus. He said, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” John 3:13. Jesus was living on earth in the midst of a few friends and many enemies, but He was also, as He here asserts, living in heaven.

To be sure His being in heaven was something different from our being in the heavenlies with Him. His statement was a declaration of His omnipresence. But His being in heaven need be no more real than our being in heaven while we are in this "vale of sorrow."

Philippians 3:20 (American Standard Version) says that "our citizenship is in heaven." In other words, we are citizens of heaven now.

What does it mean to dwell in heaven, to sit in the heavenlies in Christ? First, it means to be raised up above the low and evil elements of this world into a heavenly atmosphere. It means to have our affections set upon heavenly things, not upon things on the earth. It means that heavenly things, that is, the things of righteousness, purity, love and all kindred elements, will have more importance to us than do earthly things. Living in the heavenlies means to live in the element of love, to be actuated by love, to be filled with love—love that is begotten in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. "...The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts..." Romans 5:5. "...God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." I John 4:16. Love, instead of selfishness, becomes the mainspring of life. It banishes hatred, jealousy, envy, malice and all similar things that blight life.

In the heavenly place, we are in an atmosphere of peace. We are at peace with God, at peace with our fellow men and peaceably disposed. Those who live in heaven are heavenly minded, as it is written, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:3-5.

To be living in heavenly places requires certain characteristics in ourselves. In other words we can live in the heavenlies only when we have been *raised up* into the heavenlies by Christ. This raising up is a purification of our natures and an implanting of divinely given spiritual characteristics. One of these characteristics is inner purity. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8. We must not suppose seeing God, in the sense this means, is confined to eternity. No, we can say like Simeon of old, "Mine eyes have beheld thy salvation." As was prophesied, it shall be true of us, "...all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Hebrews 8:11. We must be godlike in the characteristics of our souls, if we would dwell with God either in eternity or in the heavenlies, in this life. There must therefore be inner purity of desire and purpose, of affection and will. There must be glad acceptance of God's will for us. We must always act from motives of love and purity. Only by this means can we have the favor of God and realize His presence with us.

Inward purity manifests itself in outward purity, that is, purity of life. Our conduct will be the fruit of love. We shall not only love our neighbor as ourselves but even love our enemies and do good to those that despitefully use us and persecute us. A great profession of religion, together with many physical demonstrations of joy, may exist when there is no inner purity and when the outer life is disharmonious and unlovely, but there can be no actual living in the heavenly places under such conditions. There must be unworldliness of spirit. Those who love the world do not and cannot love God. We must mingle with the people of the world as did Jesus, but if He dwells in us and rules our life, we can keep ourselves pure in the midst of this

life. We may dwell among men, yet sit in the heavenlies in Christ.

Living in the heavenlies we have fellowship with God. John says, "...Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I John 1:3. Again, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." I John 1:7. Fellowship must be experienced to be understood. It is the answering of our hearts to the heart of God. It is one of the most precious experiences of the Christian life. It includes a consciousness of being acceptable to God. It is the realization that our heart answers to Him and His to ours. This includes the sense of divine companionship, of divine understanding and of union with God. We are His and He is ours. The Bible expresses this relation by the figure of marriage. A marriage of true love symbolizes this sacred relation of redeemed souls to God.

In this relation, we have communion with God. We know God hears us. We know we can talk to Him as to a father. We know there is a heart that answers to our heart. We know one who understands and enters sympathetically into the things that make up our lives. Jesus said He would not call His disciples servants, but friends. Abraham was called the friend of God. It is our glorious privilege to be friends of His, in a close, intimate and satisfying friendship that will enrich our lives and make a heaven of them.

When we dwell in the heavenlies, it is our privilege to entertain God there. "...If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. Again it is written, "...I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit..." Isaiah 57:15.

Therefore God does not alone dwell in heaven—He dwells in the hearts of His people. We can entertain Him as a dear friend when He comes in and sups with us. We are called the temples of God because God dwells in us. (I Corinthians 3:16.) The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, comes into us to be an abiding guest. (John 14:16.) All these texts show clearly that it is God's purpose that man be in intimate relations with Himself in this world.

Life has two sides. Most of us could realize more of the heavenly if we should let our minds dwell more upon that side. The heavenly is not merely imaginary. It is not merely an attitude of mind. It is a glorious reality.

We shall not have fellowship with Jesus merely in His joyfulness and victory, but in "...the fellowship of his sufferings..." Philippians 3:10. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake." He had His periods of heaviness and mental distress. It is our privilege to go with Him through the valley of humiliation, through the garden of Gethsemane to Calvary. It is our privilege to fellowship His sufferings from rejected love, from unjust condemnation, from neglect and hatred. Christ was still in the heavenlies as He passed through these things, and we may be in the heavenlies with Him, yet walk with Him through such things. We have the promise that if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Let us not shrink back from whatever suffering comes to us because we are true to Christ and walk with Him.

God has promised to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." All spiritual blessings are ours through Christ or, as the American Standard Version says, "every blessing" is. When we walk with Christ we have

access to His storehouse of love, mercy, kindness and blessing. As Paul cried out, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

Since it is our privilege to sit in the heavenly places with Christ let us draw near in full assurance of faith. Let us become heavenly minded. Let us set about realizing our privileges. We must draw near to God. We must dwell in His presence. This is not such a hard thing to do. It takes some time. It takes some effort. But this time and effort are largely to free ourselves from our sense of earthly things. We are close to them, so absorbed with them, so busy with them that we do not take time for many things. We do not give God an opportunity to talk to us. We fill our minds with trivial things instead of with thoughts of the high and holy and blessed things that so fill God's will for us.

Let us learn our privileges in Christ; then set about having these privileges realized in actuality. Oh, the blessedness of being hid away in the presence of God, the sweetness of communion with Him, the joys "unspeakable and full of glory" that come to the quiet soul whose heart is all the Lord's, when we live in the very atmosphere and elements of heaven. No matter what may be our situation in life, it is the privilege of each of us to have this blessed experience.

CHAPTER XXVI

FACING THE SUNRISE

There are two directions to face in life. Which of these directions we choose to face and do face will determine, to a large extent the happiness or lack of happiness in our lives. If we face westward we face the sunset. This means facing the fading light. This means the passing away of things. It means the coming of darkness. This is a changing world; life is ever changing. Many of the things that are dear to us pass away. If we face these things as we face the sunset, darkness and gloom will settle upon us. We shall look upon fading hopes; we shall see the places of missing friends; of blessings passed away. Facing this way in life tends to bring melancholy and sadness.

It is better to face the sunrise. Even in the darkness, we may face the east with the assurance that dawn will presently come. There shall be new friends for the old friends that are gone. There shall be new hopes for the perished hopes. There shall be new opportunities instead of the vanished ones. Let us resolutely look away from the sunset to where the dawn shall break again and the glorious light shine anew upon us.

Facing the sunrise must be learned. The natural tendency, especially with very many, is to face the sunset. It is the hopeful Christian who is the joyous Christian. He looks ahead for better things. He is not disappointed. The good things are never all in the past. The things that have been lost may be replaced. What the future brings us will in a great measure depend upon the way we meet it, the outlook we have toward it and the faith with which we respond to it.

Let us change the figure somewhat. We should always face the light. When we face away from the light, we walk in our own shadow. When we turn about and face the light, the shadows are behind us. We need not walk in the shadows. It is our privilege to walk toward the light, to walk in the light, not in the darkness. Jesus said we should have the light of life and that we should not walk in darkness. There is a way therefore, if we shall find it, to have our pathway illuminated and our steps made sure. There is great value in the forward-looking attitude. One writer has said, "It is worth a thousand pounds a year to have the habit of looking on the bright side of things." Note that he calls it a habit. It is just that. We can cultivate good habits as well as cultivate bad habits. We should deliberately assume the task of cultivating the habit of looking on the bright side of things.

To look on the bright side of life, we must have the right sort of ideals. High ideals are a great inspiration. The momentum imparted to the soul by great ideals will carry it through many places of difficulty and will raise it above many of the obstacles of life.

The power of the ideal has been thus expressed, "Our ideals find us where we are; they carry us where we ought to be." Ideals, even if we never reach them, put a zest and vigor in life that it can have from no other source. Ideals help us to make the best that can be made of ourselves. Through ideals, we aim high, we strive earnestly. In contemplation of such ideals, we lose sight of many things in life that we are the better for having lost sight of.

One writer has said, "the best way to correct imperfection in ourselves and in others is constantly to emphasize ideals instead of punishing faults." There are so many people who condemn themselves and feel

that they ought to punish themselves for their faults. Just recently I had a letter, a part of which I will quote, to illustrate the attitude toward life and toward themselves many people have: "I cannot understand why it is that I cannot get complete victory. Perhaps it is self-condemnation. I am wondering if I do not enjoy condemning myself because I somehow think by going over all the ugly past and saying to myself, 'What if God won't forgive you, or maybe God won't forgive, etc.,' I punish myself a little more and perhaps God will take pity on me."

Such punishment is not part of God's plan for us. It in no way makes us more acceptable to Him. It is, however, a great hindrance to us. The Psalmist had learned his lesson. He said, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows..." Psalm 127:2. The priests of Baal tried to gain the favor of their God by cutting themselves and otherwise punishing themselves. God's approval is not won in this way. He would have us trust in His mercy, look to the sunshine of His love, face away from the shadows toward the light. We should emphasize our ideals and reach forward to them, forgetting those things that are behind.

Sometimes people start in life with high ideals, but as the years go on they lose these high ideals. Then the high hopes that went with those high ideals fade. People become disillusioned as to life, or rather they come to look upon its sordid and unlovely side and forget that it has a better side. Their minds become obscured to those higher things that once inspired them. We should beware of permitting such things to take place. We should allow nothing to lower our ideals or make us forget them. The pure always remains pure. The good is always good. Realities do not change. Our point of view may become wrong. We may come to face in the

the wrong direction. But the realities remain as they were. Youth is naturally idealistic. We should carefully preserve that idealistic outlook of youth and keep young in spirit. Years ago I observed people becoming old before their time, losing their ideals, becoming pessimistic. I resolved I should never become old. I said to myself, "My body may get old, my hair may grow white, but my spirit shall never grow old."

I was struck by the tone of a letter I received recently. The writer of it was telling her troubles. In it she said, "I am an old woman. I am fifty-four years old." It is tragic that one should view life thus. Old at fifty-four; think of it!

I know people who are young at eighty-five. Their hearts are young. Their outlook is young. Their idealism has not diminished. The way to keep young is to keep interested in life. However, the merely young outlook on life, and the mere feeling of youthfulness, do not assure a proper youthfulness. Youth is tuneful, but there is a great difference between the song of victorious youthfulness and the song of vicious youth. The song of victorious youth is the song of idealism. The song of vicious youth is the song of corruption and approaching decay. The song of victorious youth is the song of eternal youth, but the song of vicious youth is the song of aging, decay and death. Vicious youth faces the sunset. Victorious youth faces the sunrise.

A bright sunrise may be succeeded by a cloudy day. It is important that we know how to have sunshine on these cloudy days. There is just one way to do it. That is faith's way. Faith runs a shaft up through the clouds and lets the sunshine come down on the heart. In the natural world there is plenty of sunshine, just above the clouds, on the cloudiest day. In life there is likewise plenty of sunshine, if through faith we rise above the

clouds or if we pierce them and let the sunshine through.

Faith may work in another way. There may be some things in life of such a nature that we cannot bring them into the sunshine. There is one thing we can do. We can put up a reflector to throw light into the dark places of life. In a recent report of the Director of the Budget of the United States government, the story was told of a government employee who was trying hard to save expense for the government. He told how he had placed a mirror in such a manner that it would reflect light from one room into another and thus save the expense of a light in one room. Perhaps this was not a great saving, but it showed the right attitude. There are often places in life that we cannot light directly. We should learn how to reflect light from the lighted places of life and from the glorious goodness of God into those dark places and illuminate them, if not directly, then indirectly so that they may be lighted. Perhaps you have not thought of using this method. Try it. It is well worth learning.

There are many sunbeams in life that we do not see. This is because we have our attention so focused upon things that trouble us that we do not observe the sunbeams. God's sunbeams are ever breaking through the clouds, but often we shall not see them unless we look for them and look for them with the right attitude of heart. Maclaren says, "The secret of finding sunbeams in everything is simply letting God have His own way and making your will the sounding board and echo of His." Yes, that is the real motive of joyful Christian life. It is to let God have His way, without any reluctance or hesitation on our part. This is one of the greatest secrets of the singing heart. God's will, when gladly submitted to, is always joyous to us. We rejoice to have His

will done. It is shrinking from His will that causes the hurt and stills the song.

A very needful thing in life is that we cultivate a sense of humor. There are many interesting and stimulating things in life if we can see them. We need a safety valve. The faculty of mirth is given us as a safety valve. Sometimes tears have a good purpose in life and serve us well, but in general it is better to laugh over our troubles than to cry over them. The results physically, mentally and spiritually will be better. Through a sense of humor, we can sheer off many of the hard, troublesome things of life. What we cannot sheer off, we can make easier to bear. Many a person has kept up courage, faith and determination through a good laugh and has broken the spell of defeat. I do not refer to a laugh of foolishness, but to wholesome mirth.

Humor, mirth and playfulness are all divinely created to serve God's purpose in us, to balance the pain, the heartaches and the tears that assuredly will come also. The smiling countenance, the sparkling eye, the joyful laugh, go far to add spice to life. They not only come from sunshine in the heart, but they produce more sunshine therein and sunshine all about one. If we are inclined to be melancholy and troubled, moody and heavy-hearted, we need to set up a balance by filling the other side of the scales with the joyous things that may be ours, if we shall make life surrender to us its treasures that lift and cheer. It has such treasures for us all, but sometimes we have to demand them before we receive them.

When I need things in my work I fill out a requisition for them and send it to the proper place. Things are in stock, but they do not come to me until I ask for them. No doubt many of our blessings grow shelf-worn waiting for us to seek them. James said, "...Ye have

not, because ye ask not." James 4:2. Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find." We should ask and seek of God, of life, of circumstances till we are enriched with joy and peace and true happiness.

It is our right to be happy. We owe it to ourselves, and life owes it to us that we be happy. Life will pay us all it owes us if we give it a fair chance. But to receive what is ours, we must face the sunrise where these things are, not the sunset where they are not found.

CHAPTER XXVII

CONTENTMENT

Contentment is one of life's greatest blessings. But contentment is not something that can be sent down, nicely wrapped up like a Christmas gift from heaven. It is a state of mind. It is not dependent upon our situation or our circumstances. Many people are contented and happy in circumstances where others would be thoroughly discontented. Some people are discontented under the most favorable circumstances. Contentment is a structure we build ourselves. It is a state of mind we develop. It is an attitude toward things that comes to us through careful cultivation. It is something that lives inside us, not something that circumstances and conditions create.

*"If happiness hath not its seat
And center in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich or great,
But never can be blessed."*

Contentment is sometimes spoken of as a lazy virtue. Perhaps that is because some people are content with things with which they ought not to be content. We should never be satisfied to permit things to exist that ought not to exist. We should never be satisfied to be less than our best. There are wrongs that need righting. There are conditions that need improving. There is progress that needs to be made. A sort of contentment that can view these things with indifference, ignore

responsibility or evade duty, should be called by an entirely different name. When we have done our duty, met our responsibility, corrected those things that need correction so far as is possible for us, then we may have real contentment. Contentment does not mean surrender to conditions. It does mean being satisfied in the circumstances and conditions that exist for which we are not responsible.

Contentment is a lesson to be learned. Paul said, "...I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11. He goes on to tell some of the things he has learned. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philippians 4:12-13. He had learned a great secret. It was the secret of adapting himself to conditions and being at rest in those conditions. He could enjoy to the full the things that afforded him enjoyment. He could suffer patiently the things that came upon him to suffer. But whether rejoicing or suffering, he had that inner contentment of spirit, the calmness and peace of which enriched his soul and made quite tolerable a life that otherwise would have been intolerable.

We, too, need to learn the lesson of contentment. The command to Christians is, "...Be content with such things as ye have..." Hebrews 13:5. Speaking further upon this subject, Paul says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

A godly life is productive of contentment, but there are many Christians who, at least in some respects, are discontented. This discontent produces a constant urge to rebel against things.

It is a singular fact that many of the most contented people are those who live in poverty. In fact, the working people are the most contented of all people. I do not refer to that class of working people who are constantly being disturbed by the agitations of would-be labor leaders who are ever telling them of the evils of their condition. Justice to all there should be, but the useless breeding of discontent is a curse to those who are affected by it. Those who live on the common levels of life are the truly happy, provided they have the attitude of contentment.

There are many things people desire which can never give them contentment. One man says, "If I had a million dollars I could be contented." Another thinks if he had political preferment, that would satisfy his ambition, and he would be content. Another has another thing to attain, to make him content. These things, when attained, do not bring contentment. As already pointed out, contentment is a lesson learned, a state of the heart, an attitude toward things. Riches do not bring contentment. Andrew Carnegie, known to all for his wealth, and a man who should have known what he was talking about, said, "Beyond a competence for old age, and that may not be great and may be very small, wealth lessens rather than increases human happiness. Millionaires who laugh are rare." Many of us would do well to pause here and carefully study this saying of a wise and prudent Scotchman.

Jesus told His disciples not to be anxious about food and raiment and such things and added, "After all these things do the Gentiles seek..." Matthew 6:32. Possession is a goal set before them by the unsaved. The question asked about a man often is, "How much money does he have?" His supposed happiness is usually rated by the size of his bank account. No greater error in the

choice of a standard for measurement of happiness could be made. The command of the Scriptures is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." We should put first things first. If we do this, our needs will be few and our desires not much greater.

The basis of contentment is simplicity of desire. One of the things that is ruining more happiness than anything else is the desire to excel others. "We must keep up with the Joneses," is an attitude of mind fatal to contentment. It has caused more heartaches, destroyed more happiness, ruined more homes, produced more divorces, perhaps than any other one thing. This strife to excel often leads people into sin. The wife would outstrip her neighbors, so she makes large demands upon her husband for money. Pressed thus, he sometimes adopts business methods that are highly improper. In many cases, it has led to shame and disgrace. In any event, it leads to unhappiness for both husband and wife and for the whole family. Through envy, jealousy of others, and coveting what they have, many people have been brought to bitterness of soul and utterly to hate life. Better contentment in a cottage than discontent in a mansion.

Very often, prosperity in temporal things destroys happiness that has already existed in a less prosperous condition. Years ago, in one of our northern states, a man engaged in the lumbering business in a small way built a cozy cottage on the shore of a bay into which he brought his bride. They both worked, he in his saw mill and she in her cottage, and were happy. The years passed. He prospered in business and became rich. Then he built a fine mansion in the city and moved into it. After living there for some time and mingling with the society into which his riches gave them entrance, in speaking to a friend one day he said, "We are not as happy as we were in our little cottage on the bay."

A few months ago I heard Charles M. Schwab make an address over the radio. In that address he told of his big house in New York City and of another great house which he owned in the country. He said, "I don't own them. They own me. The only satisfaction I have in them is that I have enough money in the bank to pay the taxes on them." He has to look to other sources rather than to his possession for contentment and happiness.

Contentment is not built of gold or of precious stones. It is not constructed of honors or fame or the applause of the multitude. It does not come from outshining others. These may bring a sort of satisfaction but not a satisfaction which is contentment. Contentment belongs to the meek and lowly in spirit. Pride is destructive to it. Arrogance annihilates it. Covetousness curses it. Hatred poisons it. Malice thrusts a sword through it. Contentment can thrive only with the virtues. Faith, hope and charity abide with it. Peace broods over its domicile. Blessed forevermore is he who has a contented spirit.

So many nourish discontent. They are all the time looking at the things they do not possess and coveting them. They are always reaching out, stretching themselves to something they cannot attain. They find fault with the things they possess instead of enjoying them. They minimize the good in things. They see all the faults and failures. They often feel their rights are being trespassed upon. There is a frown in their hearts and a frown upon their faces.

Who is to blame for all this? The individual himself. He has adopted a wrong attitude of mind and heart. He is facing the wrong way. He has the wrong standard. He cannot be happy. He needs to turn about, face the other way, adopt a different attitude, look at things from a different angle and set different standards for himself.

He needs to learn the secret of the simple life—simple desires, temperate aspirations, bridled ambitions.

In the vale of contentment is calmness and sweetness of spirit, rest of soul. Through it flow the peaceable waters of quietness. In this vale, the song birds joyfully sing. The heart mounts up to God in praise. In it lies the spring of joy which bubbles up in gladsome song. When we have learned to be content with such things as we have and in our situation in life and in our circumstances, that does not mean that we lose all aspirations or that all effort ceases. By no means. To be content with today does not mean to be content with the same thing tomorrow. The right sort of contentment demands continual progress in the lines in which progress is possible. In fact, we cannot be contented not to make proper progress. In the vale of contentment, we are not to sit down idly dreaming away our days. On the contrary, there is a path that runs through this vale, and we are to walk in this path, ever forward, ever upward.

If we would be truly happy, if we would sing the songs of the joyous life, we must learn the lesson of contentment. We must learn what desires to gratify and what desires to repress. We must learn what things can bring contentment and what things destroy it. We must avoid the latter, while we seek the former. We must cultivate our spirits. We must trust in God. Then and only then shall we have that source of contentment and happiness within that inspires us to sing the songs of glad rejoicing.

CHAPTER XXVIII

VICTORIOUS LIVING

*"I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
His eye is on the sparrow
And I know he watches me."*

This song is a song of faith. In reality every song is a song of faith. Faith is the basis of happiness. It is the inspiration of song. We return to the theme of faith here because faith is central and vital. Christian faith is what makes the Christian life so joyous. There are many who call themselves Christians who are not joyous. That is because they do not have an active faith. Paul was radiantly joyful solely because he was a man of deep and settled faith and had the assurance that comes from such a faith. Again we quote his words, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

To Paul, Christ was real. His relations with Him were real. On that stormy sea journey that ended in shipwreck, Paul could say to those in danger with him that all would be well, that not a life would be lost. He could speak confidently because the angel of the Lord had stood by him and had given him the assurance of faith.

God promised, "My presence shall go with thee." That promise has been a comfort and consolation to God's people for three thousand years. We need to cultivate a sense of God's presence. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." His presence with

us is real, whether or not we can realize its reality. We need not try to create a sense of its reality in our imagination. It is a fact, not a thing of fancy. We have only to sense the fact and to treat it as a fact. We may say that God is everywhere. True, but it is not His presence everywhere that counts for us; it is only that part of everywhere where we are. God is just as real in that little part of everywhere where you and I now are as He is in heaven on His throne. It is His presence where we are that really counts for us. Therefore, it is the sense of the reality of His presence with us that makes Him real to us.

The Psalmist said, "Thou art with me." To be able to say this means much. First of all, it means safety. The story of how one of God's children came to realize her safety in the abiding presence of God is told by Mrs. Pearsall Smith: "I was attending a prayer meeting when a poor woman rose to speak, and I looked at her wondering what she would say, little thinking she was to bring a message to my soul. She said she had great difficulty in living the life of faith on account of the second causes that seem to control nearly everything that concerned her. Her perplexity became so great that she began to ask God whether He was in everything or not.

"After praying for a few days, she had what she described as a vision. She thought she was in a perfectly dark place and that there advanced toward her from a distance a body of light which gradually surrounded and enveloped her and everything about her. As it approached a voice seemed to say, 'This is the presence of God.' While surrounded with this presence, all the great and awful things of life seemed to pass before her—fighting armies, wicked men, raging beasts, storms and pestilences, sin and suffering of every kind.

"She shrank back at first in terror, but she soon saw that the presence of God so surrounded and enveloped each one of these that not a lion could reach out his paw nor a bullet fly through the air, except as the presence moved out of the way to permit it, and she saw that, let there be ever so thin a sheet as it were of this glorious presence between herself and the most terrible violence, not a hair of her head would be ruffled nor anything touch her unless the presence divided to let the evil through. It was so also with the small and annoying things of life. Her difficulty vanished. Her question was answered forever. God was in everything, and the angel and his presence saved her."

We shall not all have such experiences to cause us to realize the presence of God and our safety therein. God has other ways of bringing this about. We may greatly help by continually assuring ourselves that God is with us. If we should say to ourselves in our times of difficulty or danger, "God is with me; I am safe," we would presently come to feel safe no matter what the circumstances. If we should repeat over and over to ourselves in our times of need, "God is with me; God will help me," it would come to be a reality with us. It is real whether or not we realize it, but it profits us in our consciousness only when we realize it.

We need the sense of God most when we need His help and sustaining grace. It is in the times of storm that we appreciate shelter. So we need to realize the sheltering presence of God in life's storms. We can do much toward cultivating a state of mind that recognizes God's presence in our darkest times. We must not wait for the dark times to begin this development. We should develop it under favorable circumstances, then bring the consciousness of God's presence into the unfavorable time until it becomes as real in the unfavorable time as in the more favorable time.

The sense of God's presence sometimes comes from our emotions. This is only in the favorable seasons. In the unfavorable seasons, it can come to us only through faith. Therefore the need of cultivating a sense of His presence through our faith. Our faith will be tested with respect to this, as with other things. The more faith is tested and tried, when it meets and endures, the more it grows.

We need to learn to use our faith. We should form the habit of daily accomplishing something by our faith. We should pray every day the prayer of faith for some definite thing. We cannot do this if we scatter our prayers too much. We cannot concentrate faith on many things at one time. We can have a *general* faith that takes in all our needs, and this we can exercise daily, but we need a *particular* exercise of faith to receive particular things, particular help and particular grace. We should pray for many things, but there are some things on which we should specialize. We should make them a special object of prayer. We should choose something that we feel to be the will of God for us. Then we should pray for that thing until it is granted, until faith grasps its object and makes it a reality.

When we pray for many things and do not exercise definite faith for definite answers, we weaken rather than strengthen our faith. It tends to make our faith ineffective. We should use faith not only in prayer but in both the little things and in the greater things of life. There are many opportunities every day to exercise faith. Little acts of faith build character, and bring success and happiness. It is by the exercise of definite faith, acting out faith in our lives and holding the attitude of faith that faith develops and prepares us for the difficulties that may come.

Every exercise of faith prepares us the more easily to exercise it next time. Every recognition of the working power of faith in our lives and the things accomplished by it make us more capable of using faith. The use of faith in this way in the little things of life gives us a sense of God's partnership with us, of His continuous help. Sometimes we realize very greatly our need of help. Do we realize His willingness to give that help, and do we act upon such a realization? It has been said that God helps those that help themselves, but I think God loves best to help those who cannot help themselves. I think that those who are faint and weak with the toils of life, and those whose courage falters may more than any others have cause to believe that God will help them. God is not looking for opportunities to help those who need no help. His help is for those who stand in need of it and who must have it. To such it is freely given when they trust Him.

So many say, "Oh, if I knew how to have faith." One thing that may help is this, "Never let what you *do* know be weakened by what you *don't* know. Stick to what you *do* know." Always remember that the things you *do* know, whatever they are, are facts. Nothing can change them. The things you don't know, but only fear and are uncertain of, never can change the facts that you do know. So settle down on the things you do know. Do not doubt them. Do not question them. Rely upon them. Then base your attitude toward the things you do not know upon your attitude toward the things you do know. This will always give you certainty up to a certain point and will indicate what must lie beyond that point. So make facts your foundation. Stand upon the known while you face the unknown.

James said we should show our faith by our works. If we believe in God, we ought to act like it. "He thinks

he believes it, but he doesn't," said a woman of a man who had been professing his faith in the gospel. "If he really thought he had a friend like that, rich enough and strong enough to help him in every trouble, and willing to do it, too—somebody that is sending him blessings all the while he is here and getting a beautiful home prepared for him to use afterward—do you suppose he would go about so gloomy and discouraged all the time?" Assuredly not. When we really believe a thing, our conduct is in harmony with our belief. So, if we really believe God's promises, we shall be joyful Christians.

We should truly believe and have the will to put that belief into our deportment. We should have the will to be cheerful, bright and pleasant. We should not advertise that we have trouble. The more we allow our physical attitude, the tone of our voice and the look in our eyes to depict discouragement, defeat or uncertainty, the more we shall have within to overcome. God meant us to be victorious, so let us adopt the attitude of victory and say, "Since God meant me to be victorious, I mean to be victorious. It is my right to be victorious. Through God's help I will be victorious. I am victorious." This attitude will go far toward making us victorious and toward making us realize our victoriousness.

There are times when our faith grows weary, when we find it difficult to exercise. As many have said, we may say after long efforts, "My faith is worn out." At such times, we may find it difficult to pray. At such times, people are inclined to mistrust their own experiences and question whether they are right with God or what is the matter with them. Alice E. Worcester tells what she does under such circumstances in the following lines,

*"When I am very weary
I do not try to pray,
I only shut my eyes, and wait
To hear what God will say."*

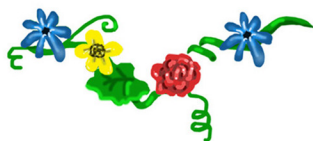
There are times in life when we can only hold still and wait. At such times, that is all God requires of us. That is all that is necessary. If God does not speak when we wait to hear Him speak, we may be sure that He will speak when it is needful for Him to speak; and when He speaks He will cause our hearts to rejoice. In these times of weariness we should not let down our faith. We should rest in faith.

We have said that faith brings joy. Over in far off Africa, on the Congo River, stands a native village. Formerly its inhabitants were sunk in ignorance and lived in mud huts that abounded in filth. A missionary went to the town and proclaimed to them the gospel message. They heard, believed and accepted it and were saved. They were transformed and set about the transformation of their town. To celebrate the great change that had come, they changed the name of the town and now it is known as Joy Town. Christ can make our town, any town, Joy Town to us.

Let us not forget that what life is depends upon what we are, and what we see depends upon how we look. The *Sunday-School Times* tells an old fable, "A cold firebrand and a burning lamp started out one day to see what they could find. The firebrand came back and wrote in its journal that the whole world was dark. It did not find a place wherever it went in which there was light. The lamp came back and wrote in its journal, 'Wherever I went it was light.' What was the difference? The lamp carried its light with it and illuminated everything. The dead firebrand had no light, and everywhere it went everything was dark."

To sum up our thoughts, the *Secret of the Singing Heart* consists in learning to be what we ought to be and to hold the attitude we ought to hold toward life. It consists in learning to adjust ourselves to our circumstances and to be happy in those circumstances. It means to take advantage of those favorable things that come in life, to make the best of the here and now and to look forward to the future with confident expectation of success and with determination to have success. It consists in walking with God, believing in Him, and acting out that belief day by day. Doing this, we shall be ever blessed and ever happy. We shall have joy and happiness, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

THE END



Those who desire fresh inspiration to approach the challenges of life God's way will certainly want to read this book.

Are you really on the road to happiness?

Are you fertilizing the worry tree?

Are you facing the sunrise?

"The Secret of the Singing Heart" will give godly insight into each of these questions plus many more. It is filled with encouraging counsel that is sure to strengthen your faith and enhance your walk with God.

