

EVERYDAY RELIGION

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A SERMON
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*“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.”
Galatians 2:20.*

I am not about to preach from this whole verse, for I have done that before—this single sentence will suffice me. I shall not attempt to enter into the fullness of the spiritual meaning of this very deep and fruitful passage. I am merely going to bring out one thought from it and to try to work that out, I trust, to practical ends. It has sometimes been objected, of the preaching of the gospel, that we exhort men to live for another sphere and do not teach them to live well in the present life. Nothing can be more untrue than this! I venture to say that more practical moral teaching is given by ministers of the gospel than by all the philosophers, lecturers and moralists put together! While we count ourselves to be ordained to speak of something higher than mere morals, we nevertheless, no, for *that very reason*, we inculcate the purest code of duty and lay down the most sound rules of conduct.

It would be a great pity, dear brothers and sisters, if in the process of being qualified for the next life we became disqualified for this! But it is not so. It would be a very strange thing, if in order to be fit for the company of angels, we should grow *unfit* to associate with *men*! But it is not so. It would be a singular circumstance if those who speak of heaven had nothing to say concerning the way there. But it is not so. The calumny is almost too stale to need a new denial. My brethren, true religion has as much to do with this world as with the world to come—it is always urging us onward to the higher and better life! But it does so by processes and precepts which fit us worthily to spend our days while here below. Godliness prepares us for the life which follows the laying down of this mortal flesh. But as Paul tells us in the text, it molds the life which we now live in the flesh. Faith is a principle for present use. Look how it has triumphed in ordinary life according to the record of the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Godliness with contentment is great gain—it has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. The sphere of faith is earth *and* heaven, time *and* eternity—the sweep of its circle takes in the whole of our being—spirit, soul and body. It comprehends the past and the future and it certainly does not omit the present.

The faith of Christians has to do with the things that now are and it is concerning the life that we now live in the flesh that I shall now speak, trying, by the help of God's Spirit, to show the influence which faith has upon it. There are seven points in which faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us will have a distinct influence upon the life which we now live in the flesh.

I. To begin—FAITH INCLINES A MAN TO AN INDUSTRIOUS LIFE. It suggests *activity*. I will venture to say of any lazy man that he has little or no faith in God, for faith always works—“works by love.” I lay it down as a thesis which shall be proven by observation that a *believing* man becomes an *active* man, or else it is because he cannot act and, therefore, what would have been activity runs into the channel of patience and he endures with resignation the will of the Most High. He who *does* nothing *believes* nothing—that is to say, in reality and in truth. Faith is but an empty show if it produces no result upon the life. If a professor manifests no energy, no industry, no zeal, no perseverance, no endeavor to serve God—there is grave cause to question whether he is a believer at all. It is a mark of faith that whenever it comes into the soul, even in its lowest degree, it suggests activity. Look at the prodigal and note his early desires. The life of grace begins to gleam into his spirit and its first effect is the confession of sin. He cries, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you and am no more worthy to be called your son.” But what is the second effect? He desires to be doing something! “Make me as one of your hired servants.” Having nothing to do had helped to make him the prodigal he was! He had wasted

his substance in riotous idleness, seeking enjoyment without employment. He had plunged into the foulest vices because he was master of money but not master of himself.

It was not an evil thing for him when he was sent into the fields to feed swine—the company which he met with at the swine trough was better than that which he had kept at his banquets! One of the signs of the return of his soul’s sanity was his willingness to work, although it might be only as a menial servant in his father’s house. In actual history, observe how Saul of Tarsus, even before he had found peaceful faith in Christ, cried, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Faith awakens the soul to action! It is the first question of believing anxiety, “Sirs, what must I *do* to be saved?” Hence faith is such a useful thing to men in the labor and travail of this mortal life because it puts them into motion and supplies them with a motive for work. Faith does not permit men to lie upon the bed of the sluggard—listless, frivolous, and idle—but it makes life to appear real and earnest and so girds the loins for the race. Everyone should follow an honorable vocation. It was a rule of the first church and it ought to be one of the present—“If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” It is good for us all to have something to do and plenty of it.

When man was perfect, God placed him in a paradise, but not in a dormitory. He set him in the Garden to “dress it and to keep it.” It would not have been a happy place for Adam if he had had nothing to do but to smell the roses and gaze at the flowers! Work was as essential to the perfect man as it is to us, though it was not of the kind which brings sweat to the face or weariness to the limbs. In the garden of grace, faith is set to a happy service and never wishes to be otherwise than occupied for her Lord. The text says, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Doesn’t faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him, suggest to the redeemed man that he should be industrious and active? Assuredly it does, for it sets the divine Savior before him as an example and where was there ever one who worked as Jesus did? In His early youth He said, “Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” He was no loitering heir of a gentleman, but the toiling son of a carpenter! In later life it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. He says, “My Father works hitherto and I work.” His was stern labor and sore travail—the zeal of God’s house did eat Him up and the intensity of love consumed Him. He worked on until He could say, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.” Now, it is no small thing for a man to be excited by such an example and to be made a partaker of such a spirit! True faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us also seeks direction of the Lord as to the sphere of its action and waits upon Him to be guided by Him in the choice of a calling.

This part of our discourse may be useful to young persons who have not settled upon what they are to do in life. Faith is a great service to us here. Much depends upon the choice of our pursuits. Very grievous mistakes have been made here—as grievous mistakes as if a bird in the air should have undertaken the pursuits of a fish, or a laboring ox should have entered into competition with a race horse. Some people, ambitious beyond their line, are trying to do what they were never made for. This is a grievous evil. There should, therefore, be a seeking unto God for guidance and direction—and faith leads us to such seeking. This prayer may be used in many senses—“Show me what You would have me to do.” In the choice of a calling, faith helps a Christian to refuse that which is the most lucrative if it is attended with a questionable morality. If the Christian could have huge purses of that gold which is coined out of drunkenness, lust, or the ungodliness of men, he would scorn to put them among his stores! Trades which are injurious to men’s minds and hearts are not lawful callings before God! Dishonest gain is awful loss. Gold gained by deceit or oppression shall burn into the soul of its owner as the fire of hell. “Make money,” said the worldling to his son. “Make it honestly if you can, but *make money*.” Faith abhors this precept of Mammon, and having God’s providence for its inheritance; it scorns the devil’s bribe!

Choose no calling over which you cannot ask God’s blessing, or you will be acting contrary to the law of faith. If you cannot conceive of the Lord Jesus wishing you success in a certain line of trade, do not touch it! If it is not possible to think of your Lord as smiling upon you in your daily calling, then your calling is not fit for a Christian to follow! Callings should be deliberately chosen with a view to our own suitableness for them. Faith watches the design of God and desires to act according to His intent. It had been ill for David to have lived in retirement, or for the Prophet Nathan to have aspired to the

throne. The law of the kingdom is—"Every man in his own order," or, in other words, "Every man according to his ability." If the Lord has given us one talent, let us use it in its own market. Or if two, or five, let us trade with them where they can be most profitably employed so that we may be found faithful servants in the day of the Master's coming. We should, also, by faith, desire such a calling as providence evidently has arranged and intended for us. Some persons have never had a free choice of what vocation they would follow, for from their birth, by position, surroundings and connections they are set in a certain line of things, like carriages on the tram lines—and they must follow on the appointed track or stand still. Faith expects to hear the voice behind it saying, "This is the way, walk in it." Trusting to our own judgment often means following our own whims, but faith seeks direction from infallible wisdom and so she is led in a right way.

God knows your capacity better than you do! Entreat Him to choose your inheritance for you. If the flowers were to revolt against the gardener and each one should select its own soil, most of them would die through their unsuitable position, but he who has studied their nature knows that this flower needs shade and damp and another needs sunlight and a light soil. And so he puts his plants where they are most likely to flourish. God does the same with us! He has made some to be kings, though few of those plants flourish. He has made many to be poor and the soil of poverty, though damp and cold, has produced many a glorious harvest for the great reaper. The Lord has set some in places of peril—places from which they would gladly escape—but they are there preserved by His hands! He has planted many others in the quiet shade of obscurity and they blossom to the praise of the great husbandman. So, then, you see, faith has much to do with the force and direction of our life in the flesh. It provides impetus by giving a man something to live for. It shows him the far-reaching influences of the thoughts and deeds of today and how they issue in eternal results. And faith also takes the helm and steers the vessel along a safe channel towards the haven of holy rest. Happy are they who, in the early days of their youth, believe in Him who loved them and gave Himself for them and so begin their life walk with Jesus! Blessed be God for converting some of us while we were yet boys and girls! O happy young people who begin life with the early dew of grace upon them! No prince of eastern empires was ever so richly bejeweled! You will not, in later days, have to lament scores of years spent in error, or half a life wasted in sin, or a whole 70 years frittered away in idleness! O that you who are yet young, who have the world before you, may now be led by the Spirit to follow Christ who pleased not Himself but did the will of His Father! So shall the life that you live in the flesh be lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you.

II. Secondly, FAITH LEADS A MAN TO LOOK TO GOD FOR HELP IN HIS ORDINARY AVOCATION. Here, again, it has a great influence over him. A believer may seek of God the qualifications for his particular calling. "What?" you ask, "May we pray about such things?" Yes. The laborer may appeal to God for strength. The artisan may ask God for skill. The student may seek God for help to quicken his intelligence. David was a great warrior and he attributed his valor to God who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight. We read of Bezaleel and of the women that were wise-hearted, that God had taught them so that they made all manner of embroidery and metal work for the house of the Lord. In those days they used to reckon skill and invention to be the gifts of God—this wretched century has grown too wise to honor any god but its own idolized self!

If you pray over your work, I am persuaded you will be helped in it. If for your calling you are as yet but slenderly qualified, you may every morning pray God to help you that you may be careful and observant as an apprentice or a beginner, for has He not promised that as your day your strength shall be? A mind which is trusting in the Lord is in the best condition for acquiring knowledge and getting understanding! As to your behavior in your work, there is room for faith and prayer. For, O brethren, whether qualified or not for any particular offices of this life, our *conduct* is the most important matter! It is well to be clever, but it is essential to be pure! I would have you masters of your trades, but I am even more earnest that you should be honest, truthful and holy! About this we may confidently go to God and ask Him to lead us in a plain path and to hold up our goings that we slip not. He can and will help us to behave ourselves wisely. "Lead us not into temptation" is one sentence of our daily prayer and we may further ask that when we *are* in the temptation, we may be delivered from the evil. We need prudence and faith remembers that if any lack wisdom he may ask of God. Godliness teaches the young prudence,

and babies knowledge and discretion. See how Joseph prospered in Egypt because the Lord was with him. He was placed in very difficult positions—on one occasion in a position of the most terrible danger—but he escaped by saying, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

A sense of God’s presence preserved him then and at all other times. He was set over all the house of Potiphar because God was with him. And so, dear friends, engaged in service or in business, you may go to your heavenly Father and ask Him to guide you with His counsel and you may rest assured that He will order all your ways, so that your daily calling shall not hinder your heavenly calling, nor your conduct belie your profession! Faith bids you seek help from God as to the success of your daily calling. Know you not what David says?—“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His beloved sleep.” It is a most pleasant thing to be able, by faith, to consult the holy oracle about everything, whether it arises in trade, or in the family, or in the church. We may say with Abraham’s servant, “O Lord, I pray You send me good speed this day.” You may expect success if you thus seek it! And perhaps some of you would have prospered more if you had more believingly sought the Lord. I say, “perhaps,” because God does not always prosper even His own people in outward things, since it is sometimes better for their souls that they should be in adversity—and then the highest prosperity is a *need* of prosperity. Faith quiets the heart in this matter by enabling us to leave results in the hands of God. Faith acts, also, in reference to our surroundings. We are all very much influenced by those about us. God can raise us up friends who will be eminently helpful to us and we may pray to Him to do so. He can put us into a circle of society in which we shall find much assistance in this life’s affairs and also in our progress towards heaven. And concerning this, we know, “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” Faith will keep you clear of evil company and constrain you to seek the society of the excellent of this earth and thus it will color your whole life. If there are no friends to help him, the believer’s dependence is so fixed upon God that he goes forward in cheerful confidence knowing that the Lord, alone, is sufficient for him. Yet, if he is encouraged and assisted by friends, he looks upon it as God’s doing as much as when David was strengthened by those who came to him in the cave.

Do you ask, “We see the connection of this with faith, but how with faith upon the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us?” I answer—Our Savior, as the object of our faith is also the object of our imitation and you know, brothers and sisters, how in all things He rested upon God. Whenever He undertook a great enterprise, you find Him spending a night in prayer. If *anybody* could have dispensed with prayer it was our Lord Jesus—if any man that ever lived could have found his own way without heavenly guidance, it was Christ, the Son of God. If, then, He was much in prayer and exercised faith in the great Father, much more should you and I bring everything before God! We should live in the flesh expecting that the Lord Jesus will be with us even to the end and that we shall be upheld and comforted by His sympathetic love and tenderness. Faith enables us to follow Jesus as the great Shepherd of the sheep and to expect to be led in a right way and daily upheld and sustained until the Redeemer shall come to receive us unto Himself.

III. Thirdly, faith exercises a power over a man’s life of a remarkable kind because IT LEADS HIM TO SERVE GOD IN HIS DAILY CALLING. Never is life more ennobled than when we do all things as unto God. This makes drudgery sublime and links the poorest menial with the brightest angel! Seraphs serve God in heaven and you and I may serve Him in the pulpit or in the kitchen and be as accepted as they are! Brethren, Christian men are helped by faith to serve God in their calling by obedience to God’s commands and by endeavoring to order everything according to the rules of love to God and love to men. In such a case integrity and uprightness preserve the man and his business becomes true worship. Though there is no straining after eccentric unworldliness and superstitious singularity, yet in doing that which is right and just, the common tradesman is separated unto the service of the Lord. Jesus says, “If any man serves Me let him follow Me,” as much as to say that *obedience* to the divine command is the true mode of showing love to Jesus. If you wish to do something great for God, be greatly careful to obey His commands, for, “to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Godly men exercise faith in God in their callings by trying to manifest a Christian spirit in all that they do. The spirit which actuates us may seem to be a small matter so long as we are outwardly right, but it

is, in reality, the essence of the whole thing. Take away the flavor from the fruit, or the fragrance from the flower and what is left? Such is correct living without the savor of grace.

The same thing can be done in several ways—you can do a right thing in so wrong a way as to make it wrong. Even in giving to the poor, a fool will trample upon their feelings in the very act of his charity! I have known others who have been unable to give, who, nevertheless, have expressed their inability in so kindly a form that they have comforted the disappointed applicant. Oh, to act in your trade and your calling as Christ would have acted had He been in your place! Hang that question up in your houses, “What would Jesus do?” And then think of another, “How would Jesus do it?” for what He would do and how He would do it may always stand as the best guide to us. Thus faith puts a man upon serving God by leading him to exhibit the spirit of Christ in what he ordinarily does, showing all courtesy, gentleness, forbearance, charity and love. Furthermore, in all that we do, we should be aiming at God’s glory. We should do everything as unto God and not unto men. There would be no eye service if we left off being men-pleasers and began to please God. Neither would there be impatience under injustice, for if men do not accept our service when we have done it with all our hearts, we shall comfort ourselves with the reflection that our Master in heaven knows how little we deserve the unrighteous censure. To live as kings and priests unto God is the cream of living! Then will you be the Lord’s free men. Serve God in serving men and serve men by serving God—there is a way of working out those two sentences even to the fullest—and thus rendering life sublime. May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do this.

If we really live to serve God we shall live intensely day by day, allowing no time to waste. Sophia Cook sought Mr. Wesley’s counsel as to what she should do in life and he answered, “Live today”—a very short direction, but one that is full of wisdom. “Live today” and tomorrow you may do the same. Plans for the whole term of life many of you may not be able to construct, but mind that you work while it is called today. “Son, go work today in My vineyard” is the great Father’s command. How would a man live if he felt that he was specially to live for God this day? Suppose that today there was a vow upon you, or some other bond, by which you felt that this whole day was solemnly consecrated to the Lord—how would you behave yourself? So ought you to behave this day and *every* day; for you belong wholly to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you! Let the love of Christ constrain us in this matter! Let us put on the yoke of Christ and feel at once that we are His blood-bought possessions and His servants forever because by faith He has become ours and we are His. We ought to live as Christ’s men in every little, as well as in every great, matter—whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Christ Jesus. Thus, you see, faith in Him who gave Himself for us leads us to spend our energies in His service and to do our ordinary work with an eye to His glory—and so our life is colored and savored by our faith in the Son of God.

IV. Fourthly, faith has a very beneficial influence upon the life that we live in the flesh, for IT RECONCILES A MAN TO THE DISCOMFORTS OF HIS CALLING. It is not every calling that is easy or lucrative, or honored among men. It is a happy circumstance when a man has espoused a business which is so congenial with his tastes that he would not change it for another if he could. But some find their trades irksome to them. This is an evil under the sun. Some employments are despised by the thoughtless and involve much self-denial and, therefore, those who follow them need much faith to enable them to live above the trials of their position. Faith teaches the humble worker to see Jesus in all His lowliness, condescending to take upon Himself the form of a Servant for our sakes. Faith reads, “Jesus, knowing that He came forth from God and went to God, took a towel and girded Himself, and washed His disciples’ feet.” That was one of the most menial of employments and if our Lord and Master did not disdain it, why should we be ashamed of the humblest form of service? From now on let no men trouble you, but rejoice because the poor man’s Savior was a servant even as you are, and He, too, was “despised and rejected of men.” Your faith ought to help you by awakening your gratitude for deliverance from a far worse drudgery. You did for Satan things of which you are now ashamed. Any work for the devil and for his black cause would be dishonorable—to rule an empire for Satan would disgrace us—to wear the crown put on our heads by sinning would be a horrible curse!

But to wash feet for Christ is glorious service. There is no degradation in anything that is done for God. Faith in God sanctifies the man and his calling, too, and makes it pleasant for him to carry the cross of Christ in his daily labor. There are some who hold their heads high, who, nevertheless, do things

that are disgraceful to humanity, but surely you and I ought never to think *anything* a hardship which falls to our lot by the appointment of divine providence. Faith is a great teacher of humility, for it bids us think little of ourselves and rest only in God. And because it fosters humility, it renders a man's task pleasant when otherwise it would be irksome.

Pride makes a man stiff in the back—there are some works which he cannot do though he would be happy enough in doing them if he had not such foolish ideas of his own importance! Hard work is no disgrace to any man—it is far more degrading to be leading the life of a fashionable do-nothing! When the Lord makes us feel that we are poor undeserving creatures, we do not mind taking the lowest room, or doing the meanest work, for we feel that as long as we are out of hell and have a hope of heaven, the meanest service is an honor to us. We are glad enough to be where God would have us be, seeing Christ has loved us and given Himself for us. Faith also removes discomforts by reminding us that they will not last long. Faith says of trial, “Bear it! The time is short. Soon the Savior comes and the poorest of His followers shall then reign with Him.” Toil on, O weary one, for the morning light will put an end to your labor, which lasts only through the hours of darkness. The glory breaks! The night is wearing away and the dawn appears. Therefore patiently wait and quietly hope, for you shall see the salvation of God!

Thus faith takes the thorns from our pillow and makes us learn in whatever state we are, to be content. Do you call this *nothing*? Has not Jesus done much for us when, by faith in Him, we have learned to endure the ills of life with sweet content?

V. Fifthly, faith has this further influence upon ordinary life—IT CASTS ALL THE BURDEN OF IT UPON THE LORD. Faith is the great remover of yokes and it does this, in part, by making us submissive to God's will. When we have learned to submit, we cease to repine. Faith teaches us to so believe in God, infallible wisdom, and perfect love that we consent unto the Lord's will, and rejoice in it! Faith teaches us to look to the end of every present trial and to know that it works together for good—thus again reconciling us to the passing grief which it causes. Faith teaches us to depend upon the power of God to help us in a trial and through the trial and in this way we are no longer tripped up by afflictions, but rise above them as on eagles' wings. Brothers and sisters, if any of you are anxious, worn out and worried, stop not in such a state of mind—it cannot do you any good—and it reflects no honor upon your great Father. Pray for more faith that you may have no back-breaking load to carry, but may transfer it to the great burden-bearer. Pray to your great Lord to so strengthen and ease your heart that your only care may be to please Him and that you may be released from all other care. By this means will you be greatly helped, for if the burden is lightened, it comes to much the same thing as if the strength were multiplied. Content with the divine will is better than increase of riches, or removal of affliction, for with wealth no peace may come and out of prosperity no joy in the Lord may arise—but contentment is peace, itself!

Whatever burden faith finds in her daily avocation she casts it upon God by prayer. We begin with God in the morning, seeking help to do our work and to do it well. At His hands we seek guidance and prosperity from hour to hour. We pray Him to prevent our doing any wrong to others, or suffering any wrong from them and we ask Him to keep our temper and to preserve our spirit while we are with worldly men. We beg that we may not be infected by the evil example of others and that our example may be such as may be safely followed. These are our great concerns in business—we tremble lest in anything we should dishonor God—and we trust in Him to keep us. A believer goes to God with the matters of each day and looks for the morning dew to fall upon him. He looks up through the day expecting the Lord to be his constant shield and at night, before he goes to rest, he empties out the gathered troubles of the day and so falls to a happy sleep. Then does a man live sweetly when he lives by the day, trusting his Lord with everything and finding God to be always near. To all this the example of the Savior leads us, and His love within our hearts draws us. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him,” and “was heard in that He feared.”

VI. Sixthly, faith has a happy influence upon the present life, for IT MODERATES A MAN'S FEELINGS AS TO THE RESULT OF HIS WORK. Sometimes the result of our work is prosperity and here the grace of God prevents a dependence on worldly things. There is a keen test of character in prosperity. Everybody longs for it, but it is not every man that can bear it when it comes. True faith forbids our setting great store by worldly goods and pleasures and enjoyments, for it teaches us that our treasure

is in heaven. If we begin to idolize the things that are seen, we shall soon degenerate and turn aside from God. How easily we may spoil a blessing! Two friends gathered each a rose—the one continually smelled it, touching its leaves, and handling it as if he could not hold it too tightly—you do not wonder that it was soon withered. The other took his rose, enjoyed its perfume moderately, carried it in his hand for a while, and then placed it on the table in water—and hours after it was almost as fresh as when it was plucked from the bush! We may dote on our worldly gear until God becomes jealous of it and sends blight upon it! And, on the other hand, we may, with holy moderateness, use these things as not abusing them and get from them the utmost good which they are capable of conveying to us.

Many pursue wealth or fame as some eager boy hunts the painted butterfly! At last, after a long and weary run, he dashes it down with his cap and with the stroke he spoils its beauty. Many a man has reached the summit of a life-long ambition and found it to be mere vanity. In gaining all, he has lost all. Wealth has come, but the power to enjoy it has gone—life has been worn out in the pursuit and no strength is left with which to enjoy the gain. It shall not be so with the man who lives by faith, for his chief joys are above and his comfort lies within. To him, *God* is joy so rich that other joy is comparatively flavorless!

But perhaps the result of all our work may be adversity. Some men row very hard and yet their boat makes no headway. When an opportunity presents itself, the tide of trade suddenly turns against them. When they have corn in the mill the wind does not blow. Perhaps they lose all but their character and then it is that faith comes in to cheer them under the disaster. I am deeply grieved when I hear of persons committing suicide because they were in difficulties—it is a dreadful thing to rush before one's Creator unbidden! Faith sustains the heart and puts aside all thought of such desperate attempts to fly from present griefs by plunging into far more awful woes. We shall bear up and come through our trials triumphantly if we have faith in God. If our heavenly Father has appointed a bitter cup for us, shall we not drink it? If the fields which we have tilled yield no harvests and the beasts that we have foddered die in the stall, shall we not bow the head and say, "The Lord has done it"? Must it not be right if the Lord ordains it? Let us still bless Him! If not, it will be our *unbelief* which hinders. How many have been happy in poverty—happier than they were in wealth! How often have the saints rejoiced *more* during sickness than in their health! Payson declared that during illness he felt happier than he had ever been, far happier than he had ever expected to be. Though bereavement has come into the family and sickness unto the household, yet faith has learned to sing in all weathers because her God is still the same!

O brothers and sisters, faith is a precious preparative for anything and everything that comes! Mind that you have it always ready for action. Do not leave it at home in time of a storm, as the foolish seaman left his anchor. Faith is not a grace to be shut up in a closet or fastened to a communion table, or boxed up in a pew! Faith is an everyday grace which is to be our companion in the shop and in the market; in the parlor and in the kitchen; in the workroom and in the field! Yes, it may go into the workhouse with the poor as well as into the mansion with the rich! It may either cheer the dreary hours of the infirmary, or sanctify the sunny weeks of holiday. Faith is for every place in which a good man may lawfully be found. Should fate command you to the utmost verge of the green earth, to rivers unknown to song, yet shall a childlike faith in God find you a home in every clime, under every sky. Oh, to feel the power of it, as to all that comes of our labor, that the life which we live in the flesh may be lived by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us!

VII. Lastly, faith has this sweet influence upon our present life—IT ENABLES A MAN CHEERFULLY TO LEAVE HIS OCCUPATION WHEN THE TIME COMES. A Christian may have to quit a favorite vocation on account of circumstances over which he has no control. He may have to immigrate to a distant land, or altogether to change his mode of living which may involve many a wrench to his feelings. It is not always easy to leave the old house and all its surroundings and to take a long journey. Nor is it pleasant to change one's settled habits and begin life anew. Yet true faith sets loose by worldly things and is ready to haul up the anchor and make sail at the divine bidding. The believer says, "Command my journey, and I go." I am but a tent-dweller and must expect to be on the move. Like Israel in the desert, we must follow the cloud and journey or rest as the cloud ordains, for here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come. Faith has the same gracious influence upon those who enjoy unbroken prosperity. It keeps them from taking root in the soil of earth and this is a miracle of divine

grace. Sometimes our vocations have to be given up through weakness or old age. It is a hard pinch to many a busy man when he feels that he has no more strength for business, when he perceives that other and more vigorous minds must be allowed to step into the long occupied position. The workman cannot bear to feel that his hand has lost its cunning—it is a sharp experience.

Faith is of essential service here. It helps a man to say, “My Master, I am one of the vessels of Your house. If You will use me I will be glad. But if You will put me on the shelf, I will be glad, too. It must be best for me to be as You would have me.” If faith resigns herself to the supreme wisdom and love and goodness of Christ and says, “Do with me even as You will! Use me, or set me aside.” Then retirement will be a release from care and no source of distress. The evening of advanced age may be spent as joyfully as the noontide of manhood if the mind is stayed on God. “They shall bring forth fruit in old age” is a promise full often realized by believers, for all around me are venerable brothers and sisters who are more useful and more happy than ever, though the infirmities of years are growing upon them!

And then comes, at last, the leaving of your vocation by death which will arrive in due time to us all. Then faith displays its utmost energy of blessing! Brethren, may we meet death as Moses did, who, when God bade him climb the mountain, for there he must die, uttered no word of sorrow, but like a child, obeyed his Father, went upstairs to bed, looked wistfully out at the window upon the Promised Land and then fell asleep! How sweet to look upon the goodly land and Lebanon—and then to be kissed to sleep by his Father’s own mouth, and to be buried, man knows not where! His work was done and his rest was come! Beautiful are the departing words of Samuel when, laying down his office, he can challenge all men to bear witness to his character! Happy man, to depart amid universal blessing! O that each one of us may be ready to render in his account before the judgment seat of Christ—let the last day come when it may! Our Master, by whose love we have been endowed with faith, has taught us how to die as well as how to live! He could say, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do,” and He would have us say it. Thrice happy is the man who, in laying down the shepherd’s crook or the carpenter’s plane—in putting aside the ledger or the class book never to open them again, can exclaim—“I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith; from now on there is laid up for me a crown of life which fades not.”

Good old Mede, the Puritan, when he was very old and leaning on his staff, was asked how he was and he answered, “Why, going home as fast as I can! Just as every honest man ought to do when his day’s work is done. And I bless God I have a good home to go to.” Dear aged saints so near home, does not faith transform death from an enemy into a friend, as it brings glory so near to you? You will soon be in the Father’s house and leave me behind, and yet I cannot tell—I remember that the other disciple did outrun Peter and came first to the sepulcher, and so, perhaps, may I! You have the start of us in years, but I may be called home before you, for there are last that shall be first.

Let death come when it may—we shall not be afraid, for Jesus, who has loved us and given Himself for us, is the resurrection and the life. Living this life in the flesh by faith upon the Son of God, we are waiting for the usher of the black rod to bring a message from the King to summon us to meet Him in the upper house! Why should we be hesitant to go? What is there here that we should wait? What is there on this poor earth to detain a heaven-born and heaven-bound spirit? No, let us go, for He is gone in whom is our treasure, whose beauties have engrossed our love! He is not here—why should we desire to linger? He has risen! Let us rise!

Thus, from the beginning to the end of the life that we live in the flesh, faith upon the Son of God answers all things, and all its paths drop fatness. O come Lord Jesus! Come!

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