

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

EVERYDAY RELIGION.

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 ii. 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 fulness 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 to 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, nay, and for that very reason, inculcate the purest code of duty, and lay down the soundest rules of conduct. It would be a great pity, dear brethren, 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 thither; 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 moulds the life which we now live in the flesh. Faith is a principle for present use; see how it has triumphed in ordinary life according to the record of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Godliness with contentment is great gain: it hath 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

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soul, and body; it comprehends the past and the future, and it certainly does not omit the present. With the things that now are the faith of Christians has to do; 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 worketh,—“worketh by love.” I lay it down as a thesis which shall be proved 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 endeavour to serve God, there is cause gravely 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 thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” But what is the second effect? He desires to be doing something. “Make me as one of thy 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 ill 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 wilt thou have me to do?” Faith arouses 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 labour 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, idle; but it makes life to appear real and earnest, and so girds the loins for the race.

Everyone should follow an honourable vocation. It was a rule of the old 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." Does 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 Saviour before him as an example, and where was there ever one who worked as Jesus did? In his early youth he said, "Wist ye 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 after life it was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." His was stern labour 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 thou gavest me to do." Now, it is no small thing for a man to be roused 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 labouring ox should have entered into competition with a race-horse. Some people are trying to do what they were never made for, ambitious beyond their line. 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 thou wouldest have me to do." In the choice of a calling faith helps a Christian to refuse that which is the most lucrative if it be attended with a questionable morality. If the Christian could have huge purses of that gold which is coined out of the drunkenness, the 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, anyhow, 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 suitability 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 several 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, 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 ye in it." Trusting to our own judgment often means following our own whims; but faith seeks direction from infallible wisdom, and so it 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 pine and 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 doeth the same with us. He hath made some to be kings, though few of those plants flourish much. 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 hand; 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 to-day, 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 bejewelled! You will not in after-days have to lament a score years spent in error, or half a life wasted in sin, or a whole seventy 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," say you, "may we pray about such things?" Yes. The labourer 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 valour 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 honour 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 *behaviour* also 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 men prudence, the babes 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 way, 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 ye not what David says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour 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 giveth 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 thee send me good speed this day." You may expect success if you thus seek it: and peradventure some of you would have prospered more if you had more believingly sought the Lord. I say "peradventure," 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 want of prosperity. Faith quiets the heart in this matter by enabling us to leave results in the hand 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 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 that "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 colour your whole life. If there be 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 be 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 say, 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 Saviour as the object of our faith is also the object of our imitation, and you know, brethren, 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*, by endeavouring 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 be 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 serve 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 thou wishest 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 flavour from the fruit, or the fragrance from the flower, and what is left ? such is

correct living without the savour 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 churl will trample upon their feelings in the very act of his charity; while 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 grace.

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 full, 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 to-day": a very short direction, but one that is full of wisdom. "Live to-day," and to-morrow 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 to-day. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard" is the great Father's word. How would a man live if he felt that he was specially to live for God *this day*? Suppose that to-day 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 possession, and his servants for ever, 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 whatsoever 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 coloured and savoured 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 honoured among men. It is a happy circumstance when a man has espoused a

business which is so congenial with his taste 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 hence 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 henceforth let no man trouble you, but rejoice because the poor man's Saviour was a servant even as you are, and he too was "despised and rejected of men."

Your faith ought to help you by arousing 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 dishonourable: 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 to him to carry the cross of Christ in his daily labour. 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 alone in God; and because it fosters humility it renders a man's task pleasant when else 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 honour 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 Saviour cometh, 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 thy labour, which lasts only through the hours of darkness. The glory breaks; the night is wearing away, and the dawn appeareth. Therefore patiently wait and quietly hope, for thou shalt see the salvation of God. Thus faith takes the thorns from our pillow, and makes us learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content. Call you 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—THAT

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 so to 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 the trial, and through the trial, and in this way we are no longer stumbled by afflictions, but rise above them as on eagles' wings. Brethren, if any of you are anxious, careworn, and worried, stop not in such a state of mind ; it cannot do you any good ; and it reflects no honour 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 so to 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 be 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 dishonour 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 ere he goes to rest he empties out the gathered troubles of the day, and so falls to a happy sleep. Then doth a man live sweetly when he lives by the day, trusting his Lord with everything, and finding God to be ever near.

To all this the example of the Saviour 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 hath 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 surfeit of 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 was continually smelling at it, touching its leaves and handling it as if he could

not hold it too fast; 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 bough. We may dote on our worldly gear until God becomes jealous of it, and sends a 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 hath 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 flavourless.

But perchance 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 thus 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 hath done it"? Must it not be right if the Lord ordains it? let us bless him still. 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 storm as the foolish seaman left his anchor. It is not a grace to be shut up in a closet, or fastened to a communion table, or boxed up in a pew, but it is an everyday grace which is to be our companion in the shop and in the market, in the parlour and in the kitchen, in the workroom and in the field; ay, 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 labour, 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. Seventhly, faith has this sweet influence upon our present life, that IT ENABLES A MAN CHEERFULLY TO LEAVE HIS OCCUPATION WHEN THE TIME COMES. A Christian may have to quit a favourite vocation on account of circumstances over which he has no control; he may have to emigrate to a distant land, or altogether to change his mode of living, and this 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 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 thy house; if thou wilt use me I will be glad; but if thou wilt put me on the shelf, I will be glad too. It must be best for me to be as thou wouldst have me." If faith resigns herself to the supreme wisdom and love and goodness of Christ, and says, "Do with me even as thou wilt: 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 be 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 brethren 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 knoweth 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 thou gavest me to do," and he would have us say it. Thrice happy 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; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life which fadeth not away." 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; 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 the 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 sepulchre, and so, perhaps, may I. You have the start of us in years, but we 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 loth 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? Nay, let us go, for *he* is gone in whom our treasure is, 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 answereth all things, and all its paths drop fatness.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122, 121, 116 (Part III).