

**The Sermons of  
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**Volume II  
Old Testament Sermons  
(incomplete)**

**The Book of Psalms  
(from Psalm 51 to 104)**

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**(from Psalm 51)**

## The Sacrifice God Wants

Minden, LA

August 12, 1934

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.”

Psalm 51:17

We readily recognize these words. They are a part of David’s prayer of penitence after his memorable fall. There are few words as appealing as these. This is a prayer that has every ring of genuineness. There is no need for us to go into the history of the circumstances under which these words were uttered, for the reason that every Bible reader knows them and because they do not have a particular bearing on the passage. The passage can be considered as it is.

1. The sacrifice idea is very prominent in the Scriptures. We find it at the very dawn of human history. “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which to obtain witness that he was righteous, God testifying to his gifts” (Hebrews 11:4). We recall the Abraham and Isaac incident. In the Mosaic ritual, the sacrifice was central. The animal should be without blemish. But as time went on, the people got to thinking of the symbol more than of the thing symbolized. The prophets came urging the inner consecration of which the outward sacrifice was but a sign. “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”. Or as the psalmist says here, “For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit”.

We cannot be too often reminded that religion is inwardness, not outwardness. Or perhaps I might better put it, Religion works from within outwardly, rather from without inwardly. The idea that we can merely engage in the externals and satisfy the Lord is wrong. We need the externals. They have their value. But we fail if we stop there. Unless there is something going on within, we are not getting on in the Christian life.

Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites who had dealt so treacherously with the people of Israel when they came up from Egypt. He was told to completely destroy all, even their animals. But Saul through self-will, spared Agag and the best of the sheep and the oxen. He said to Samuel that the purpose of the preservation was sacrifices to God. But he was told that sacrifices from a stubborn heart were not acceptable (1 Samuel 15).

2. The true sacrifice is a soul with its evil crushed. The King James reading is likely to convey a wrong impression. We should stop to consider what is meant by a “broken spirit”, for it is possible to get just the opposite meaning to that intended.

There is no particular virtue in a broken and defeated spirit, in a crushed spirit. There are plenty of people who are whipped out, defeated, in life's struggle. They have lost their punch. They are asking, "What's the use?" However much we would like to help such people, we cannot say that their condition has any virtue in it. There is no encouragement either for derelicts, leftovers, ambitionless, and aimless people. The passive idea is not here.

Strange as it may seem, the triumphant idea is here, the aggressive spirit of the conqueror. This thought is brought out by the translation of Dr. Moffatt: "The sacrifices of God are a soul with its evil crushed". Instead of a soul characterized by spinelessness, absence of spirit, energy, fortitude, there is need for one conscious of strength in a high moral struggle.

In the rearing of children a generation ago, it was thought necessary to "break the will" of a stubborn child. The idea was that perversity of the heart can be overcome only by crushing the spirit. It is now known that we need all of that will and determination. For us to crush the will of a child is to sin against it. But we do a great thing when we enable that child to gain the mastery over its own perversity. The one to break the spirit of the child is the child himself, and that is done by getting control of it.

Our family once owned a mustang named "Fanny", a horse that at times would rear and shy away from objects, and balk and back up, when hitched to wagons and buggies. A previous owner evidently tried the whip as a means of subduing her. But that was not satisfactory, for it brought on other complications. Luke the colored tenant was able to make her a very peaceable animal by cutting down her feed. We also tried the plan, wherever we could, of simply letting her go on with her antics until she saw the folly of it all and perhaps hurt herself before it was over.

Some of us may come to the Lord with perversity still in our hearts. We want our own way still. The evil within is not subdued, broken. The mustang quality is still there. We haven't been broken to the harness. We are not ready to take Christ's yoke.

There are various estimates of man in the world. One is that he is "a minute crawling mass of carbonic hydrates", a mass of chemical constituents purchasable at a drug store for 90 cents. Another is that he is the only god he knows. Mistakes? They are one ascending. Another view is that man is largely a machine. But the Word of God leads us to believe that man is the handiwork of God whose chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Sin has entered into the heart of man, and brought about an estrangement. There can be no reconciliation until sin is crushed out.

The promises of revelation are to "him that overcometh". He may "eat of the tree of life", "shall not hurt of the second death", will be given "to eat of the hidden manna", will be given "power over the nations", will be made "a pillar in the temple of my God", will sit with Christ on his throne.

Confucius said, “The temptation of youth is passion; the temptation of middle life is ambition; and the temptation of old age is miserliness”. The soul in which these and other evils are crushed will be acceptable as a sacrifice to God.

General Gordon wrote in his diary, “Today, I hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord”. So may we all do everything, with our sins.

3. The victorious soul is Christ-centered. The natural heart is self-centered.

It took the world a long time to give up the idea that the earth is not the center of the universe. But change had to be made. There are people who think themselves the center of things, and who have to learn to get into harmony with the law of things.

The Christ-possessed soul is conscious of a moral victory. “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me”. “Life means Christ to me,” is the way Dr. Moffatt renders Philistines 1:21.

The little town of San Quentin, Mexico, was long ago besieged by the Spaniards. Fever, famine, treason, terror lurked everywhere. One day the enemy threw a message over the wall on which was written a promise of mercy if the inhabitants would surrender. They read the note, turned it over, and wrote on the other side of the parchment two words, “Regum habemus”: “we have a king”, and shot it back into the camp of the enemy.

We have a King. With his help we can bring a sacrifice acceptable to God, a soul with the evil crushed out.

## The Indispensable Rock

Minden, LA

August 18, 1929

“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

Psalm 61:2

It was probably David who wrote this, and the occasion was his exile from the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary, during the revolution of Absalom, his son. He was perhaps, at the time, in the region across Jordan. In this psalm, we have the expression of an ardent desire for the house of God and the vow of gratitude.

In this passage, he expresses assurance that God will lead him to a place of security -- a rock which is too high for him to ascend unaided. It is easy to go from this to the symbolical use of the term “rock” that we have in the Scriptures. Rock is used symbolically to refer to God himself -- “The Lord is my rock” (Psalm 18:2). It is also used to refer to Christ. “For they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). Peter’s confession of faith in Christ was called a rock (Matthew 16:18), and Peter, in his thoroughly Christ-like character, came to be called a rock (John 1:42).

There is therefore no reason why this text should not be made to apply to Christ. He is the Rock to which God would lead us all.

I saw again the other day that mountain of stone that stands 15 miles from my boyhood home in Georgia. It is probably  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile high and about seven miles around its base. During the Civil War, the northern army tried to tear it to pieces, but made no progress. It seems too solid. The storms may whirl about it and the lightning strike it, but it remains unshaken. It is little wonder that some should think that if a record should be inscribed upon its side, that record will abide through the ages. In like manner the Rock of Ages will abide through time and eternity. It is to such a rock that we need to be led.

### 1. This Rock is a Refuge of Salvation.

While we would like to believe that what has been done by us is gone forever, yet we know that such is not the case. The Past is ever with us, the evil of it as well as the good.

We are told that light travels on carrying the images of the past, and that if we could catch these images, we might find the whole story of the past. Human memory is said not to fail.

Even though we may not be able to recall much of the past, it has all left its imprint upon us. We are our past. The question then is, Is that past redeemable? Are we ever to be bound by the mistakes of the past?

Our past also touches other lives and alters them. That means that others bear the consequences of our sins. Sometimes the consequences of our sins may be worse in other lives than in our own. Our act, which may be unthought, may start a trend in a life that proves disastrous.

There are those who assert that a self-respecting man will carry his own sins and have no need of a Savior. But it is a fact of life that others are bearing the consequences of our sin.

Some rebel against the fact that they may be suffering unjustly the consequences of another's wrongdoing. But as a matter of fact, others may be suffering for some of our wrongdoing.

This sharing of consequences makes it possible for us to see how a just Being could, by forming a tie of human experience, bear our sins, without leaving any for us to bear.

## 2. This Rock is a Retreat in Distress.

When Nehemiah, cupbearer to the king in Shushan the palace received the depressing report concerning the situation over in Jerusalem, he went to God and prayed earnestly for his help.

We may not realize it, but we are ever "standin' in the need o' prayer". But when the tide of evil circumstances begins to come in upon us, we want to be led to the rock that is higher than we.

During the World War, the British war Cabinet received the message of General Haig which read, "We are fighting with our back against a wall". After remaining in a stunned silence for a few moments, one member said, "It is Heaven help us now". The Prime Minister replied, "That is just where we are. Let us ask Heaven". The Cabinet meeting became a prayer meeting.

At the time of our participation in that great struggle, it is said that in a little town named Verbena, a few miles north of Montgomery, AL, there was the custom of observing everywhere in the town a two minute prayer when the bell tolled at six PM. While the church bells sounded, the population would stop -- regardless of creed or circumstances -- and pray, "God bless our President and soldiers and the nations, and guide us to victory".

Audubon was a famous son of Louisiana, a naturalist, a lover of birds. He describes his religious experience as follows: "During my deepest troubles I would frequently wrest myself from those around me and retire to some secluded spot in our noble forest and many a time at the sound of the woodthrushes' melodies I have fallen down upon my knees and prayed earnestly to God. This never failed to bring me the most valuable thoughts and always comfort."

### 3. This Rock is the Necessary Complement to our Spiritual Nature.

When the life-giving sap refuses to run, the leaf turns golden yellow and falls off. The sun shines in its splendor and feeds the gardens, forests, purifies the streams, stores the earth with energy and fuel, and imparts health to living beings. But to an infinitely greater degree, God is all to the world. If the world were dispossessed of God, eternal night would reign.

There is a fundamental recognition of this fact. There is a deep hunger in man for God. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God". People may express doubt about God and seemingly dispense with him, but it is difficult to completely let him out.

The difficulty that even a wicked life encounters in ridding itself of God is described in Hugo's "By Order of the King". For a summary of this, see Quayle's "The Blessed Life", p. 197.

The Rock we seek must be higher than us. A God we could understand would be no God at all.

Jesus gives the satisfaction that we need.

1. To mind. Never man spake as he. He grappled with the problems of the universe: God, human relationships, destiny, immortality.

2. To Heart. They say there is nothing static in nature. All molecules, and even smaller particles of matter are in vibration. Resonance is the response of kindred wave lengths. The best of the eternal heart finds resonance in the human. He gives the message that satisfies the guilty heart.

3. To Will. This is a world in which every man is said to be a king. But we are ready always to bow to kingly character. We find ourselves ready to crown Him Lord of all.

## Can God Afford to Bless Us?

Minden, LA	January 31, 1943
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	June 11, 1944
Ceta Canyon Conference	July 1, 1946
Wilshire Church, Austin, TX	November 20, 1949
Killeen Presbyterian, Killeen, TX	November 25, 1951
Rockdale Presbyterian, Rockdale, TX	November 21, 1954

“God be merciful unto us and bless us...all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

Psalm 67

As I turn through the pages of the Bible for a passage that would seem to suit the needs of these particular times, I seem not to be able to get away from this beautiful psalm. The Book of Psalms was the Hebrew hymnbook. I am sure that the old Hebrew would turn through his book of psalms, as we do through the hymnal, until he found the psalm that fitted his mood and spiritual needs at the time. It is easy to imagine that this was one of the most used psalms, probably some wanted to sing it at every service. If the chief musician had asked for suggestions as to which of the psalms they should sing, there would be someone each time who would ask for “God be merciful unto us”. Oh, I am sure that there would be times when they would ask for the “Blessed is the man” psalm, or “Why do the heathen rage”, or “The heavens declare the glory of God”, or “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation”, or “The Lord is My Shepherd”. But I am sure they loved the 67<sup>th</sup> psalm.

So fully has the Book of Psalms ministered to the spiritual needs of man that some even in our day maintain that here we have all the hymns we need with which to express the spiritual responses and yearnings of our souls. Even though we feel that the Lord intended that we should make the vehicles of our praise include more of the Christian truth that subsequent revelation has given us, we, too, turn ever and anon to the psalms, and to this particular psalm, for our help. There are times when nothing else will do.

What a psalm this is for such a time as the present. With the whole earth torn with strife, with so many evidences of reversion to attitudes and practices of savagery, with the terrific waste of the earth’s resources in the unholy enterprise of war, with the absorption of thought, energy, possessions in the one aim of gaining victory on battlefield, we feel that there is no prayer that so fits our mood as this of the 67<sup>th</sup> psalm.

The psalm is not a prophecy so much as the utterance of a profound hope. We have elsewhere in the Scriptures prophecies which furnish ample grounds for the hope that is here expressed. So, we would not be wrong in regarding this as a statement of things to come.

The hope expressed in this psalm is that by God's blessing on his people, his salvation and his praise might be extended over the earth.

### 1. A Blessing is Asked For (vs. 1)

The popular idea is that it is an easy thing for God to show mercy to a world of sinners. But the Bible shows us that it is not such an easy thing as we might think. The claims of truth and righteousness must be maintained. How can God be merciful and at the same time be just and true and righteous?

We find the answer to that question in Christ. Christ satisfied the demands of truth and righteousness in order that God may show mercy. Hence Zacharias could say: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers" (Luke 1:68-72). That mercy promised was symbolized by the mercy seat, a piece of temple furniture. The Lord Jesus is the true mercy seat.

The expression "cause his face to shine" means to show favor. Just as people manifest their attitude towards one another by the expression on their faces, so is God thought of here as manifesting a kindly, benignant attitude by an illuminated face.

During the last World War, I lived in Dallas. One day I was at the railway station at a time when it was jammed with people, for you recall that at that time the railroads were almost the only way to travel. People were arriving and departing, others were seeing loved ones off or welcoming them home. One could easily become interested in watching the play of emotion on the faces of people who were indifferent to all observers. I saw one young woman come up from the train that had just arrived, and be greeted by a young man whom I took to be her fiancé. The man placed a tiny box into the palm of the woman's hand, and she opened it then and there. It contained a ring. Her face beamed as she looked at it and then at him. She caused her face to shine.

God causes his face to shine upon us; not, however, because of anything we may do to deserve it. It is purely an act of gratuitous mercy and love.

Unquestionably, the Lord has blessed us as a people and as individuals. He has caused his face to shine upon us. Manifold are the evidences of that favor. He has given us a great country to be born in -- there is none greater today. He has provided us with unparalleled opportunities to acquire property and move about without hindrance. We have the right to think, talk, believe, and worship. We have a glorious history, incomparable Christian traditions, a heritage of high principle and noble example. Best of all, we have the church, the Word of God, Christ and salvation.

We would like to have these continued. We are justified, I am sure, in praying God's blessing on those efforts which will make for security and prosperity. So, we pray that the Lord would cause his face to shine upon us. But the first approach should be the prayer, "God be merciful unto us". Most of all, we need mercy as a nation, as a church, as individuals.

## 2. The Purpose of the Blessing is Serve to the World. (vs. 2)

“That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations”, “Thy way” of gracious dealing. “Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord”. “My ways are higher than your ways” (Isaiah 55:8f). “Saving health” means salvation.

In these uncertain times, we are praying for God’s blessing on us and ours. Can God afford to answer our prayers? Can He do what we ask Him to do without injury to us?

Children going off to college sometimes manifest a desire to take along quite a collection of accessories -- typewriter, radio, even an automobile. Usually, for the most of us, the family resources are such as to settle the question without further comment. In other cases, the parents have to decide whether to grant the wish or not. The college I attended once had a regulation forbidding students to have automobiles. The authorities maintained that cars were not needed by the students and that they furnished too great a temptation to waste time. In some large universities, scattered over large areas, it might be found that a car is needed to make the round of classes. The question in the mind of the parent would be, What use would the student make of the car if he were given one?

So might God be led to consider whether He could afford to grant our requests for certain blessings -- security, prosperity, health, victory, influence, prominence. Why do we want these things? What use would we make of them if we had them?

Sir Edward Gray, who was Foreign Secretary in the British Cabinet at the outbreak of World War I, is as well known for one remark he made as for anything else. It was after the historic debate in the House of Commons concerning the entrance of England into the war (August 3, 1914), that Gray and his friends were spending some hours together in the Foreign office. It was in the early hours of the morning that he looked out of the window and said, “The lamps are going out all over Europe: we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime”.

Well, the armistice came a little more than four years later -- November 11, 1918. Following that, the lights began to shine again in Europe, but along with a growing concern throughout the continent over the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. That continued for 21 years. When on September 1, 1939, Hitler and his forces invaded Poland, and the second World War was touched off. Then lights again over Europe flickered out. The aim of these central powers was to put an end to religious freedom and establish a totalitarian state throughout the world. They repudiated the Bible and Christianity. With the surrender of Japan in August, 1945, a long six years of fighting came to a nominal end.

Then, as we began to look hopefully to the relighting of lights over the world, a new menace arose. The boys came home. We began to dismantle our camps. We sold, almost gave away, our equipment. But once again we find ourselves in the midst of war preparations, living in the realization that now as never before in our history death can be rained down upon us any day. This very spot might be one of the first places visited.

Besides our boys and husbands are either in Korea or in Europe, in the very forefront of our defense.

How can one have peace of mind under such suspense and danger? How can one have exultation of spirit, kindness of heart, strength of soul in days of stress and peril? How can one go on when he knows that a third World War will undoubtedly do all that Sir Edward Gray said the first World War was about to do?

It can come only as we have a sense of mission. When we have the feeling that come what will we are going to stand up to it calmly and resolutely, for the reason that it is not for ourselves alone that we endure, but for the world. Standing sponsors of a way of life that is Christian, for concepts of freedom, justice and compassion, we cannot afford to be traitors or moral cowards, or self-seekers. Even though there are those among us who would betray us, use places of trust for personal gain, and weaken the hands of those who lead, we can still be strengthened by the thought that though in a battle with the enemy we may lose the conflict we still gain the victory. The Lord has blessed us for such a mission -- "that Thy we may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations".

It is what people do with their prosperity and their privileges that determines their right to have them, and even their real enjoyment of them. Too many of us think of our blessings as something that is meant for selfish enjoyment.

### 3. The Results of Such a Ministry in the World.

(1) An Exultant World. Twice in this psalm, in a sort of refrain, the writer expresses the wish: "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee". But people can be led to praise God as they come to know Him; and they come to know Him only through the faithful dissemination of truth on the part of his believing children. When God's way is known upon earth, His saving health among all nations, the nations will be glad and sing for joy.

Praise is the natural expression of appreciation. It is the privilege and duty of the church. "Let all the people praise thee," and not just the choir, or a few members of the congregation.

Now and then you hear the idea expressed that Christian missions merely upset a people already satisfied with their own religion. The fact is that the people have already become dissatisfied with their own religions. Only the forms and ceremonies are observed. We contribute to the happiness of the peoples of the world when we give them the gospel.

(2) A Rightly Governed World. "Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nation upon earth". It is true that God always exercises dominion over the nations of the world, and in his judgments upon nations he is governing entirely by righteous principles. He overrules the foolish and perverse acts of men so that they ultimately fit into the eternal purpose.

God has chosen to leave man to choose his way, so that he will be a responsible creature. He has set up the Kingdom as the ideal towards which man might strive. He

has given us the principles of that Kingdom in the Bible. Just to the extent that those principles are embodied in our affairs, so do we have righteous government. God has blessed us, not for the purpose of encouraging corruption, but for the purpose of proving our trustworthiness.

(3) A Highly Productive World. “Then shall the earth yield her increase”. Prosperity in a nation goes along with uprightness and religion.

The British East India Company said at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: “The sending of Christian missionaries into our Eastern possessions is the maddest, most expensive, most unwarranted project that was ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast”. The English Lieutenant Governor of Bengal said at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: “In my judgment, Christian missionaries have done more lasting good to the people of India than all other agencies combined” (Dr. Henry VanDyke, in Hallock #1555).

“If a congregation is not a missionary church, fifty years afterwards it will be a missing church.”

Think what would have been the condition of the world if the havoc of war could have been avoided. The trouble with our earth is that it is sin-blighted.

#### 4. The Glorious Expectation: World Kingdom.

“All the ends of the earth shall fear him.” Some say this is prophecy, others that it is wishful thinking. I think the day will come when this will be true. We are a long ways from it now. But time is no concern to God. It will eventually come. The fact that it might not come in our day should not keep us from entertaining the hope and working for it.

In Germany, during the days of Hitler’s regime, there was a Quaker who never gave the Nazi salute. When called to court, as he was often, he simply smiled in a friendly way. He lived a life of radiant service. His friends asked him: “What can you do, a lone individual, against the mighty German legions?” His answer was, “If I were in a dark room, I wouldn’t get a broom and sweep away the darkness. I would light a candle. Perhaps, after a while, others would do the same. Then some day the darkness would disappear.”

Let us keep the light burning wherever we can by our example, by our gifts, by our prayers, by our interest and encouragement.

“For not the sword’s loud clashing,  
Nor roll of stirring drums;  
With deeds of love and mercy,  
Thy heavenly Kingdom comes.”

## Devotional

District Meeting of the Council of Church Women  
First Christian Church, Rockdale, TX

October 21, 1953

“God be merciful unto us and bless us....”

Psalm 67

A good psalm with which to begin a day is the 67<sup>th</sup>. It was a song to be sung in the liturgical service in the Temple. I am sure it was a favorite then. It is a favorite passage now.

“God be merciful (gracious) unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon (among) us.”

This is a prayer. We make this prayer, or one like it constantly. Usually, however, we want the Lord to provide us with the things we want -- a home, a comfortable income, good health, friends, success in our undertakings, children well and happy. Those are normal desires. Like children, we may be wanting things that would not be best for us. It is rather perilous to pray without the provision that we want only that which we should have.

One of the most impressive talks I ever heard was made many years ago in Dallas by H. H. Hyde, then president of the Mentholatum Company. He had made a fortune and had lost it. Losing it was the best thing that ever happened to him and his family, he said. He had been living a purely secular life. His children were running wild. He felt self-sufficient. Then the crash came. He made a confession to the Lord and took the Lord in as a partner in his business. He said he had been happy as he was not before.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

-- Cowper

“That thy way may be known (in the) earth, thy saving health (saving power) (salvation) among all nations.”

If God would bless the people who claimed him as their God, that would commend him in the eyes of the nations who worshipped other gods, and would tend to win them to the worship of Jehovah. Now we know that God did bless Israel in a material sense, and they forgot the Lord who had blessed them.

We should ask ourselves when we pray for blessings what our motive is. What use will we make of the blessing when we get it? Do we want a better car than some have in order that we may be envied? Or are we ready to make such use of our resources

that people will say that the religion by which you live is worthy of any person's respect and consideration.

Abraham was blessed by the Lord, and through him all the nations of the earth have been blessed.

“Let the people (peoples) praise (give thanks unto) thee, O God, let all the people (peoples) praise (give thanks unto) thee.”

We come together and ask the Lord to bless us with a rain, but we forget to come back together to thank him for the rain. Persons who travel through some of the war-torn countries of the world come back saying that the people of America are not appreciative enough of what they have. There are the blessings of the Christian religion, the church, freedom.

“O let the nations be glad and sing (shout) for joy: for thou shalt (dost) judge the people (peoples) righteously (justly) (with equity), and govern (guide) the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise thee, O God, let all the peoples praise thee.”

We cannot help thinking what a different world we would have if all nations worshipped the same God and claimed him as Father through the power of the gospel. True, the Christian world is all divided into groups of various sizes. Some will not fellowship with others. But the overwhelming majority will fellowship together.

“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn” (Proverbs 29:2). “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord; and he delighteth in his day” (Psalm 37:23).

The day contemplated by the psalmist will not be realized until the Kingdom of God comes in all of its fullness and power.

“Then shall the earth yield her increase (the earth has us yielded her increase -- RSV), and God, even our own God, shall bless us (God, our God, has blessed us -- RSV). God shall bless us (God has blessed us -- RSV) and all (let all) the ends of the earth shall fear (fear) him.”

Bible translators say it is not possible to tell the tense of the verbs used here. It is a matter of judgment. The King James prefers the future rendering; the RSV prefers the past. That seems to be the preference of other translators -- the past tense. “The earth has yielded her increase: God has blessed us”.

How truly can American people say, “The earth has yielded her increase”. The man who is on a about the hottest spot in the nation today is Secretary of Agriculture Ezra T. Benson, in the President's Cabinet. There are today in the nation great surpluses of wheat, cotton, corn and other commodities. How to keep prices up for the farmer in the face of these surpluses is the cause of the headache. What would have happened if there had not been drought?

The commodities, conveniences, gadgets which we once considered luxuries have come to be considered necessities: automobiles, radios, television, deep freeze, air conditioning, airplanes.

David Lawrence, in this week's (Oct. 23, 1953) U.S. News and World Report, has an article with this significant title: "It could be Heaven". He has been traveling over highways in the countryside in a region where the Autumn has already begun to paint the leaves of the trees with iridescent coloring. It isn't heaven, because, he says, "The world's troubles grow. Apprehension is increasing. Friction multiplies. The air is filled with threats". The trouble narrows down, he says, to the individual -- you and me. We are more concerned about creature comforts than for the things of the spirit. Spiritual values have fallen into decay. He quotes this: "There is in the world enough for everybody's need, but not enough for everybody's greed."

Before we lay the blame at the door of others, let us ask ourselves whether the nations would be glad and sing for joy if everybody in it had no more genuine Christianity than you and I have.

## Fortitude Without Folly

### Psalm 73

A thousand years before Christ, a servant of Jehovah said in an hour of depression, "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence".

Three thousand years have passed since, and similar ideas are still entertained frequently. The effort to withstand evil has been likened to the attempt to sweep back the incoming tide. People who fight for civil righteousness get to the point of declaring that there is no use. Crime prevails. Corruption exists among those in authority. The law is flouted. Many Elijahs have sat under Juniper trees complaining of the hopelessness of the task.

Then in the depths of despair, we are cowards. We have no heart for the struggle. The slightest opposition will intimidate us.

It looks to me as if there were need of a constant challenge to courage. There are people giving up in the face of difficulties. There seem to be more people who try the suicide method of escape. People who are unable to see the matter through.

The story of Beethoven. Born in Western Germany, December 16, 1770. Disclosed phenomenal musical genius before he was four. Gave a series of concerts in a nearby city at seven. Toured Holland at 10, conducted the orchestra of an opera at 14, played before Mozart at 17. But deafness began to steal upon him. By the time he was 30, he was almost stone deaf. It was after that that he produced his great symphonies. He died at the age of 37, murmuring, "I shall hear again in heaven".

Arthur Kavanagh was born in Ireland a century ago. Was born with neither arms nor legs, merely stumps instead. Predicted that he would be a useless cripple all his life. He lived 68 years. First learned to make his own way by a series of springs and jumps. Soon learned to write legibly, and even to paint creditable pictures. Could ride horseback in a gallop, even jumping fences. He was made sheriff of Kilkenny county. Was elected to British Parliament and represented his constituency for 14 years. The secret of his life was sheer courage.

The "air" was full recently of references to Columbus. In his days, many remained contentedly at home, ridiculing the idea of attempting a western sea journey. But the plucky Genoan faced opposition, ridicule, and an untraversed sea, and won for himself immortal fame.

Genoa, 1922  
By J. Lewis Milligan

Fair Genoa! Italy's ancient pride!  
Flanked by the hills and fronted on the sea;

At once the symbol of stability  
And enterprise: the ever-pulsing tide  
Lured thy great son to venture on its wide  
And perilous wastes, o'er which in visions he  
Beheld a Western World which was to be  
A home where migrant people would abide.

Fair Genoa! Give to war-worn mankind  
A new Columbus, who with ultra sight  
Can see a world to which our eyes are blind.  
Where Love is Consort to the reign of Might,  
Where Peace at last shall clasp the hand of Right,  
And Brotherhood shall all the nations bind!

Sooner or later each of us faces the problem. In fact, the present situation brings many into the very heart of it. Can we see it through?

It is being demonstrated that defeat can be turned into victory in the last few minutes of play.

But the courage that will enable us to do this cannot be gotten at once. We must build courage as we build mental and physical strength.

Some rules have been given for guidance (Gilkey: Every Day Problems, p. 180f).

1. One must learn to keep attention on things one has rather than on things one has not. Rejoice in assets rather than moan over liabilities. Many a man has his eye on big salaries and high positions, and is forgetting his good health, education, friends, safety, and present position.

2. Difficult situations will disclose new powers within you. Thus we are enabled to face the future without fear. Some men do two men's work, and wonder how they do it.

3. Keep faith in God's help. Development of religious life is important. "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear." God answers prayer more often by inner change. Our inner perspective is changed. It was when the psalmist went into the sanctuary that he understood the things that took the heart out of him.

4. Remember that in the battle you must use to the full your reserves. "Having done all, to stand." Use ingenuity to effect new methods of operation.

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Life is an adventure and demands daring. The demand for faith has increased.

Courage is firmly facing a danger whose seriousness is fully known and keenly felt. There was a difference between the courage of the Greek and the Turk. The Greek

was alert and sensitive, the Turk stolid and indifferent, due largely to mental and physical sensitiveness.

Matthew Arnold said of Sophocles that "He saw life steadily and saw it whole".

## The Greater Value of the Least

Minden, LA  
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX  
Rockdale Presbyterian, Rockdale, TX

January 20, 1929  
February 16, 1947  
May 23, 1954

“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Psalm 84:10

Consternation was produced in a group of boys of preschool age about Christmas time when one of their number appeared in a policeman’s suit. Now these youngsters had been accustomed to the costumes of indians and cowboys. In fact, they may have been wearing these at the time. But the blue coated officer of the law produced at once an inferiority complex in the rest and was easily the master of the situation. And why not? Does not the policeman put people in jail at will? Is he not in possession of the key to the municipal hostelry where gentlemen in waiting have opportunity to repent at leisure? He’s a doorkeeper.

There has been a traditional belief that Peter holds the key to the gate of heaven, and that it is he that the applicant for admission must satisfy before admission can be secured. This probably grew out of the statement which Jesus made to Peter, in which he said, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

I feel sure that Peter does not occupy any such position. But if he does it is a very important place. A small boy, such as I once was, might be excused for not being able to understand the saying of our text, when the psalmist declares, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”. Who wouldn’t?

But with fuller experience, one comes to see that this statement is not so foolish after all. Those who are acquainted with fraternal orders know that the doorkeeper stays outside the door, and is not a participant in the proceedings within. They stay on the threshold. So uninteresting is such a position that it is difficult to get someone to fill the position without financial inducement. But the psalmist says, “I had rather be a doorkeeper and remain on the threshold in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”.

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In these latter days, we hear a great deal of talk about values. It seems that the term is variously used. But it may be thought of as a quality of life. The values of life which we regard most important are selected according to our point of view. There are

artistic values, emphasizing primarily beauty; scientific values, emphasizing truth; ethical values give first place to goodness; and spiritual values giving emphasis to salvation.

Value is not to be determined by price, for that is an estimate in terms of dollars and cents only. Value is affected by two factors: utility and scarcity. Air can't be sold, and yet it is invaluable. Health has value, but it is not exchangeable.

Each of us has his scale of values, and by it we may be judged. We get some insight into the noble qualities of the American statesman, if he was sincere, when he said, "I had rather be right than president".

And so here we have a man stating his preferences -- dealing in values. He is saying that a very small portion of one privilege is of greater value to him than a very large portion of another.

#### I. A Short Life of Goodness is Better than a Long Life of Evil.

A short life of service is better than a long life of indifference. A doctor, writing in the *Christian Endeavor World* (June, 1922) speaks somewhat disparagingly of the many diets advocated, saying in effect that long life on some of them would hardly be worth living. We cannot measure life by length. Methuselah's 969 years would count for more than the 33 years of Jesus. "We live in deeds, not years". There are people today who could surpass Methuselah's record for length and yet produce nothing that would leave the world better. They produce nothing but leaves, no fruit.

Some people ignore the cream to get the blue milk because there seems to be more of it.

#### II. A Little Religion is Better than None.

There is danger that we may yield to the temptation to place a small valuation on our grasp of spiritual truth when we think of it in connection with the exceedingly stronger hold of the religions sons of Anak. Through lack of opportunity or aptitude, one may not have explored the devious ways and winding labyrinths of theological discriminations, and hence to him much of the discussion may be unintelligible and uninteresting. Were it not for the reassuring words of our Lord, one might come to feel that Christian faith is for the "wise and prudent", and not for busy men and women, whose minds must grapple with civic, economic, and commercial affairs.

It is true that there are natures which naturally respond more readily and more wholeheartedly than others to religious truth. Their enthusiasm bubbles over. Their fervor is kept at white heat. They experience spiritual suffocation under the restraint of ordinary religious activities, and crave the atmosphere of a continuous revival. They live on the mountain tops. Their spiritual sensibilities are keener, and their powers of spiritual discernment are more acute.

I know saints of God who seem to live in another world. In their spiritual attainment, they have passed beyond the sordid things of earth. There are mothers in

whose presence we feel the reverence that the presence of an angel might provoke. If we were to come into a faultlessly attired social assembly with our dirty work clothes on, we would feel no more out of place than we do when our own meager apprehension of spiritual truth is contrasted with the transcendent vision of those who have been caught up in the third heaven. It is like placing one of your own works of art beside a Rembrandt masterpiece.

But shall we hold in contempt our own limited spiritual attainments because others abound in the riches of Christ Jesus? Sooner should we think of having no regard for the modest structure which we call home because it hasn't a brownstone front and imported furnishings.

David first attempted to go forth to battle clad in the panoply of the king's armor, but wisely decided that the modest equipment that was his own was something more to be desired. That was characteristic of the man. Whether he wrote the 84<sup>th</sup> psalm or not, it is like him to say, "I had rather be in the house of my God, though only on the threshold, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness".

### III. The Humblest Christian is Better than the World's Greatest.

If you were to ask someone to name the twelve greatest women of history, you might be given the names of Susanna Wesley and Monica, mother of Augustine. But in all probability you would be given more famous women.

For instance, there was Catherine de Medici, a queen of France in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Her name is written large in history. She was a woman of extensive power, and it was her ambition to make it absolute. To achieve this end a general massacre of thousands was instigated on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1572.

The name of Cleopatra is famous. Through power of wit and personal charm, she gained ascendancy over to Roman Triumvirs. Queen of Egypt, she aspired to be ruler of the Roman Empire, with Alexandria as its capital. But her hopes were blasted by the superior force and stern measures of Octavius. Who has not heard of Cleopatra?

An humble Christian woman is greater, we think, in the sight of God than either of these famous women. They were dwellers in tents of wickedness. It were better to have an inconspicuous station in the kingdom of God than to reign in the domain of evil.

The pity is that there are still women and men who feel with Satan in Milton's "Paradise Lost" that:

"To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:  
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven" (Bk. I:262).

It was Jesus who said, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

It was the Christian conception that the psalmist had when he said, "I choose to sit in the meanest place in the house of my God, rather than have the freedom of the tents of wickedness". He had rather hold to the right, even in obscurity than to sacrifice principle

to gain popularity. He had rather live on meager returns from honest sweat than to luxuriate in abundance that has been dishonestly acquired.

Harold Bell Wright, well known writer of fiction was once a minister of the gospel. Had he continued as such, he would probably have had ever present the problem of making ends meet. He would have been unknown, perhaps, outside the circle of his ecclesiastical affiliations. But he gave up the ministry to become a writer of fiction and his books have been sold by the thousands. Wealth beyond his early dreams has been poured into his lap. We wonder if he is happy with it all. The daily press has heralded the fact that complications have arisen in his domestic relations. It seems to me that it were better to preach the gospel even to a few than to produce widely read novels of questionable value, even though it bring wealth and ease.

Some confidently assert that "every man has his price". We do not believe it. That which makes us confident as regards the future of our country is the fact there are great numbers of people who would not yield their humble stations in the realm of God for the acclaim and material possessions of the whole world. So long as the youth are taught to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to courageously follow his example and counsel, the gates of hell cannot prevail against this nation. The bedrock of our civilization is righteous character, and the basis of character is godliness.

"The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king of men, for a' that."  
"The rank is but the guines's stamp --  
The man's the gowd for a' that."

Some parents give us occasion to think that they had rather their children had a knowledge of books than of God -- a knowledge of natural law than a knowledge of spiritual law. These are not alternatives, it is true. There may be a knowledge of both. But in banishing religion from education, men are skimming the milk of civilization. Better is it for youth to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then add wealth and knowledge.

"The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." We know better, but we sometimes make the mistake of dangling the glory of the terrestrial alluringly before the eyes of the young, and bluntly, if at all, present the glory of the kingdom of God.

Goodness is better than genius. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Unholy and irresponsible genius leaves in its wake the wrecks of young lives fascinated by its brilliancy. Goodness is constructive and wholesome. This is the savor with which the salt of the earth is pervaded. The pursuit of goodness is dull and uninteresting only to those who have not tried it.

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Grace Moore recently (January, 1947) lost her life in an airplane crash in Denmark while on a triumphal tour of Europe. John Rosenfield, of the Dallas Morning News, while admitting her faults, said she was undoubtedly a success from more than one point of view. But Grace was never greater than she was before she became enamored of luxuries and her standards became warped by an inordinate desire for the “good things” of life. She once related that early in her career, when she stood in the wing of the famous stage of the Metropolitan in New York, about to make her debut before the Golden Horseshoe, she remembered what her pastor said to her when she was a girl singing in a little church in Tennessee with which her family was connected. “Gracie, the Lord has blessed you with a beautiful voice. Sing for his glory.” But the words of the minister died out of her mind as another type of life beckoned to her. The fascination of a glamorous career carried her into circles in which the minister’s counsel would have little appreciation.

Saloons had not been operated in Minden for many, many years when prohibition was repealed throughout the nation, and the way was open again to open these up. There was in that city a man (Melton), a member in good standing in one of the churches, who reasoned that someone would be opening saloons in Minden, and that such person would make money. He decided that he might as well be that person. So he opened two saloons and made some money at the business. He was soon turned out of the church of which he was a member. He was discredited in the community. He preferred to forsake his Christian relationships in order to derive profits from the sale of alcoholic drinks.

## The Peril of a Divided Heart

Minden, LA  
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX  
Duncan, OK  
Sherman, TX  
Westminster, Waco, TX  
Ballinger, TX  
Rockdale, TX

November 23, 1930  
February 20, 1944  
June 7, 1945  
March 14, 1946  
May 25, 1952  
March 9, 1953  
March 22, 1953

“Unite my heart to fear thy name.”

Psalm 86:11

A friend of mine once said to me that he felt that the term “fear” as applied to the attitude of the Godly person towards the Creator had now become obsolete, and properly so, since Jesus had revealed God in such a different light from that in which he was seen in the Old Testament days. He felt that the attitude of love and friendliness was more fitting than that of awe and apprehension.

My answer was threefold: first, that Jesus, both by precept and example, taught an attitude of profound respect for God, as when he said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Second, that the word “fear” as used in Christian terminology, to describe the attitude of a Christian to his God, has the meaning of “loving reverence”, “fond deference”. Third, that the decline in reverential awe on the part of God’s people towards their God was one of the distressing characteristics of our time. We are on too familiar terms with deity. Not only does the majesty of God’s power and the perfection of his character call for such an attitude of reverence, but the establishment of our own relationships and the cultivation of our own characters call for such an attitude. The attitude of reverence is basic in the development of persons.

Here, this psalmist is saying that he wants this feeling of reverence in his own life. In fact, he wants that to be in complete possession of his inner being. He is not content to have it as an occasional experience, as one of his many moods, as a suit which he may put on or off as the notion moves him. He wants no half-hearted performance of the functions of his religion, no recalcitrant voice within him to dampen his ardor, no foreign entanglements within that weaken his efforts and impair his strength. He would not be content with anything less than a wholehearted commitment to the principles of his religion.

It seems to me that we are here putting our finger on the great source of weakness and impotency in the church and in individual Christians today. Just as it has been so frequently pointed out that American can easily fail in this war if there is not a wholehearted enlistment of all resources in its prosecution, so is it true that we may fail in the great undertaking of living a Christian life because we are going about it in only a

half-hearted spirit. This is a timely prayer, even after these many centuries: “Unite my heart to fear thy name”.

1. It is natural for us to have a divided heart.

Dr. E. E. Slossen, in a book of his entitled, “The Sermons of a Chemist”, has a little jingle that runs like this:

“Within my earthly temple there’s a crowd:  
There’s one of us that’s humble, one that’s proud,  
There’s one that’s broken hearted for his sins,  
And one that unrepentant sits and grins,  
There’s one that loves his neighbor as himself,  
And one that cares for naught but fame and pelf,  
From much perplexing care I would be free  
If I could once determine which is me!”

Is there one here today who has not felt somewhat the same way? Have you not found that within you there are at least a better self and a worse? Have you not observed that some good people are at times capable of doing some very mean things; and that some very wicked people are capable of doing some very noble things? This is because there is division within them.

We are familiar with the term “dual personality”. There are times when we might think that ours is more than “dual”. As the psychologists would say, our personalities are “unintegrated”. If the psalmist had consulted a psychiatrist, he would have told him that his trouble was that his personality was unintegrated.

You might ask, “How do I get this way, anyhow?” But think a minute. What are the factors that contribute to the making of your personalities? For one thing, there is your heredity.

Did you ever stop to count up your ancestors? You have two parents, but four grandparents, eight great grandparents, 16 great great grandparents. In the tenth generation back there live 1,000 or more of your ancestors. About six or seven centuries ago, about 2,000,000 of your ancestors were living. It is one of our tendencies, if we should find that one of that vast host was a noted person, that we inherited his qualities. We do not feel the same urge when we discover quite a number who did not do so well. From that vast host of ancestors we inherit a great multiplicity of traits, piled up in some instances. Do you wonder that we have different traits?

It is the assertion of inherited traits that some believe to be responsible for the achievements of people whose early environment would seem to be unfavorable. Lincoln is a classic example among Americans. Shakespeare was the son of a bankrupt butcher and an illiterate woman, which is one reason why some have maintained that Shakespeare did not write the plays that bear his name; Beethoven, son of a confirmed drunkard and a tubercular mother; Michael Faraday, English chemist and electrician, who made such

remarkable contribution to our knowledge of both sciences, born in a loft over a stable, his father a broken down blacksmith and his mother a common drudge. Qualities of their ancestors must have become converged in these individuals and revealed themselves as genius.

Another factor that contributes to our personal make up is environmental influence. Some call it life situations. Some say that this is more important and effective than heredity. The human infant is more susceptible to influence of his surroundings than any other animal.

We may be said to be the sum of our experience, the deposit of our thinking, the sum of what has happened to us, from the beginning of our existence in this world. Everything thrust into our minds remains, and becomes a living, dynamic thing. It helps to make up our personalities. We respond to life situations. That response becomes in itself a part of us. The dominant group of impressions may be good or bad. Murder may thus be committed by one who is not criminal. This develops what we commonly call "complexes".

There is a third factor, our own initiative -- actions and impressions that result from deliberate pursuit of one's own philosophy of life. That may not be a consistent philosophy. Because it is not, this factor lends its quota to the formation of a divided personality.

## 2. There is Peril in Such a Status.

The peril of that state has been expressed in the familiar phrase, "United we stand, divided we fall". That is as true of a personality as it is of a nation.

One in such a state is weak. He can never be sure of himself. Just as when a man's physical organs do not coordinate and he cannot be sure of his abilities, so is it true when he comes to deal with his mind and heart. He needs unification. The psalmist felt that he did, so he prayed, "Unite my heart".

Some Christians are like changeable silk. It looks brown or green, according to the way the light shines on it. You can get either color just as you present it to the light. So with some people in their religious life.

One distressing fact is that some people deliberately adopt such a status, under the impression that it is good policy.

The city of Texarkana is on the dividing line of two states. In fact, the dividing line between Texas and Arkansas runs down the middle of one of the principle streets, and that line is indicated by small markers in the street. It is possible to drive down that street with half of your car in Texas and half in Arkansas. When our children were small, they got a deal of pleasure out of the experience, whenever we were in Texarkana. One would say that she was making a trip in Texas, while another on the same seat would be making a trip in Arkansas. Then a third member of the family would get in position so that he could say that he was making a trip in both states at the same time -- one foot on the Texas side and the other on the Arkansas side. That situation did not last long,

however, for the moment soon arrived when the car had to be all in Texas or all in Arkansas.

There are people who try to go through life with one foot on the side of Christ and religion, and the other foot on the side of the world. One may think for a while that he is doing pretty well at it. But the time will come when he will have to decide which way he is going.

Peter followed his Lord, but afar off. He was present at his trial, but warmed himself by the enemy's fire. He regarded himself as a disciple of Christ's, but he preferred to keep that secret. But that did not work. He was crowded into a corner and he had to declare himself one way or the other. He was weak. And so is every man who tries this dual policy.

Jesus had already said in Peter's presence that it could not be done. He had said that a man must strike a focus. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." He had said that no man can serve two masters. Therefore, he said, "seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness".

### 3. We Need the Unifying Power of a Wholehearted Commitment to Christ.

It is not easy to get this complex nature of ours unified. It is not easy to whip a bunch of recruits into an army. But until you do so, you have no army. It would be useless to send a million raw recruits to fight the war in Europe. They must be trained and disciplined to operate according to basic principles, under a single command.

There are certain steps necessary to bring this about. It cannot be done all at once.

One step is Conversion. By this, we mean that religious experience that marks the prevailing tendency of man's life from a downward to an upward direction. A man turns and faces Godward. There are cases on record in which it appears that conversion brought about a sudden and complete unification of the inner self. It seemed that the whole inner being was brought into complete harmony with the will of God. In other cases, the transformation has not been so thorough and final.

Here is where so many have wrong impressions. When a man becomes a Christian, he merely indicates what he intends to make the major, dominant trend of his life. He will stumble along for a while. No one is perfect at any time, and we must not expect perfection from the beginning.

The next step should be uniting with the church. The advantage of church membership is illustrated by the plan employed by mountain climbers. You have seen pictures of three or more men scaling the heights of some towering peak. You have noticed that they are held together by a rope. It is a means of safety. It is a mutual support. Christianity is a social religion. The church has been established for the purpose of providing this bond of union among the followers of Christ.

In the days of youthful self-assurance, one may not feel the need of the church. But there will come times, and we never know how soon, when the steadying support of

the church will be indispensable. Staying out of the church, after conversion, is like buying a ticket on the train and riding on the platform.

But that still is not enough. Someone will say, "Are you now talking about a Second Blessing?" Yes, I am talking about a second blessing, and a third and fourth, and so on. I do not believe that the work of Sanctification can be done by any single act of commitment. It is that idea which has brought the term into dispute.

As the Shorter Catechism puts it, "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness".

Maybe the psychologists would say that this procedure is the "progressive integration of the component interests of personality with an expanding dynamic sense of the rally center which Jesus disclosed and interpreted as ultimate reality" (Stolz: *Psychology of Religion Living*).

But better than all of this, and far more understandable, is the simple prayer of the psalmist, which we should ever make our prayer: "Unite my heart to fear thy name".

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E. Stanley Jones (*How to Be a Transformed Person*) relates that a Negro went to Alcoholics Anonymous, and when asked, "So you want to get rid of drink?" he replied, "No necessarily, I want to get rid of the thing it do". He wanted to get rid of the consequences without surrendering the cause. There is a sense of halfway-ness pervading the churches -- a stopping this side of conversion, says Dr. Jones (p. 79).

## God Our Eternal Home

Minden, LA (Homecoming Sunday)

September 7, 1924

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Psalm 90:1

There is a hymn in our hymnbook which begins like this:

“O God our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And -- our eternal Home.”

I wonder if we think much of the fact that God is our home. We have often thought of the fact that heaven is our home. But the idea that God is such may not have been so frequently in mind.

And yet that idea is set forth in the Scriptures in the most familiar passages of the Book. Take our text for instance: how often have we read and heard read those familiar words: “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations”. The psalm that follows this begins, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”. Paul declared on Mars Hill that in God “we live, and move, and have our being”.

Therefore, I hope that we will make this a Homecoming Day in the truest sense. This house of worship stands for God. It can be the home of God’s people only when God is here. In gathering again after our weeks of separation, we are coming back not so much to the house as to our accustomed place in the great all-pervading personality of God.

### Homesickness of the Soul

There is a very common indisposition to which the name “Nostalgia” has been given. Some of you may have been afflicted with it this summer. And some of the young boys and girls who are soon leaving for college will perhaps have a touch of it. That is but another name for Homesickness.

Fellow townsmen find wonderful comfort in each others company when both are far from home. The larger schools have state clubs. Their existence is due to the desire to bring as much of the old home into the present surroundings as may be possible.

Those of you who are familiar with local history will have to correct me if my surmise is incorrect. But I believe I see in the very name of our city an evidence of

homesickness. I have heard often of the German settlers who came into this part of the country. And I know that Minden is the name of a German city of perhaps 40,000 people. Putting things together, I have concluded that back in 1837 when Mr. Charles H. Veeder established our town, a desire to bring something of the old country into the present surroundings entered into the choice of a name.

It is the same factor that contributed to the selection of such names as “New England, New York, New Amsterdam, New Jersey”.

There is such a thing as homesickness of the soul. It is that which Jesus meant to illustrate when he related the story of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal said, “I will arise and go to my father”.

John Burroughs, the late well known American naturalist, once went on a visit to Carlyle in London. He later described that visit (“A Sunday in Cheyne Row”). Among other things that Burroughs said is this: “A kind of homesickness of soul was on Carlyle, and it deepened with age”.

There is a loneliness in a life of sin.

#### Complete Satisfaction in God

This statement in the text is a striking one. And yet it is not so fanciful as it might seem at first. This idea of living in God is made comprehensible by the fact that our spirits seek refuge in the personalities of fellow human creatures.

But no human nature is large enough to absorb the affections and life of another. Therein lies the bane of jealousy. God can furnish the soul with ample freedom in the broad expanse of his nature. Having been made by him and for him, and since we are not content until we rest in God, God can with full propriety be jealous of his children.

Just as it is true that this church could not be a spiritual home except as God is present, so the house in which we live could not be home in the truest sense without God. Heaven should not be home without God.

“As the marsh-hen builds her nest in the watery sod,  
I will build me a home in the greatness of God.”

#### Eternal in Duration

We are constantly striving to perpetuate our old homes. Long after our better judgment urges a disposition of the property, we find ourselves for sentiment’s sake keeping the property intact. We regret to see the old family hearth despoiled. We try to keep the home fires burning.

All may get away from home, but they want a place to which they may return to pay their homage of devotion to the past.

That is true, too, of the church. Very often this summer, I heard members of the First Church, Shreveport say that they regret to see the old building disposed of. Just the other night one member told me that he had attended that church for over 30 years, and that very naturally he felt that it was a pity to lose its fine traditions.

Some such sentiments, I am sure, were entertained by members of our own church when they saw the old frame structure loose from her moorings on this spot to give place to another and more commodious structure. And as we gather today, I am sure that some come with mingled feelings. It is difficult to reassemble old memories about a new structure.

But this is the way with the temporal world. There is change and decay in all things earthly. Progress requires change.

“Change and decay in all around I see,  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

I have read that Alphonse Daudet describes the passing of his friend Edmond de Goncourt in these words, “My wife prayed and wept upon her knees at the foot of the bed. I, who knew no prayer, held his hand in mine, bending over him my tears mingled with the death dew upon his brow. I spoke to him quite low, quite clear. ‘My friend, it is I; I am here quite close.’ I do not know if he could hear me” (from King of Love, J. D. Jones, p. 31).

We may live in each other, but the place of abode is very unsubstantial and impotent.

God is anxious to have a great homecoming. Jesus looking out over on the city of Jerusalem expressed the great yearning heart of God. “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not” (Luke 13:34).

The home of the brood is beneath the wings of the hen. So God would gather us.

To be Godless is to be eternally homeless (Riddle).

If there is one here today who is spiritually homeless, I am going to urge that you take the words of the hymn as your own:

“I’ve wandered far away from God,  
Lord, I’m coming home,  
Too long the paths of sin I’ve trod,  
Lord, I’m coming home.  
Coming home, coming home  
Never more to roam  
Open wide thine arms of love,  
Lord, I’m coming home.”

## Numbered Days

Minden Presbyterian Church, Minden, LA

November 2, 1941

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations...”

Psalm 90

“Thinking man has always been interested in his past,” says Dr. Edward Chiera in his book, “They Wrote On Clay”, in which he tells of significant archeological exploration in the region of ancient Babylonia. People of the present are not always careful to preserve the records which the people of succeeding generations will wish they had. One reason is that the significance of the present is not always appreciated. It is difficult to know what will survive.

Professor Chiara’s book has to do with clay tablets produced as far back as 5,000 years ago. While that seems a long time, astronomers hold that five millenniums constitute an insignificant portion of the world’s history. If 5,000 years are but as a moment, what of such a mere flash of time of only 90 years’ duration?

In the light of such antiquities as we have in the world, we ought perhaps to offer apologies for taking time to make much of a little stretch of 90 years.

If we are to ignore all sentiment, I suppose there is no reason why we should take time for an anniversary observance. Neither is there reason why we should limit our reflections to periods which are marked by multiples of 5 or 10, unless it be that the markings are symbols of progress and give us occasion to reflect.

We are thinking today of an institution that is only 90 years old -- the Minden Presbyterian Church. Yet this church is three (3) years older than the Presbytery of Red River; it is ten (10) years older than the Southern Presbyterian Church; and it is fifty (50) years older than the Synod of Louisiana.

It is a good point for a moment’s pause, to express appreciation, and to reflect.

By coincidence, it comes about that a passage of Scripture that is most appropriate for such an occasion is the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm -- the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is thought, and so stated in our Bibles, that Moses was the author of this psalm. If so, this is one of the world’s oldest poems. There is something impressive in reading the thoughts of ancient men. This poem is older than Homer.

But it isn’t the antiquity, but the thought of the poem that makes it peculiarly pertinent to this occasion.

### 1. God’s Days are Not Numbered (1-4)

The psalmist here says that God has existed through “all generations”. “Before the mountains were brought forth or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God”. “A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is passed”, “as a watch in the night”.

“Thy throne eternal ages stood,  
Ere seas or stars were made;  
Thou art the everlasting God,  
Were all the nations dead.  
Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present in thy view;  
To thee there’s nothing old appears --  
Great God, there’s nothing new.”

Half a century or more ago, there was a memorable dinner held in London. Leaders of contemporary English thought were there. No set addresses. No topic had been assigned. Dean Stanley, of Westminster, was asked to preside. He proposed the question: “Who will dominate the future?” Professor Huxley, the well known scientist, spoke first. He talked of physical science. He said, “The future will be dominated by the nation which sticks most closely to the facts”. There was a moment of silence. Then the Dean called on Edward Miall, member of Parliament and president of the Royal Commission on Education. He said: “I agree that the future will be dominated by the nation which sticks most closely to the facts; but I want to add one word: “All” the facts. The greatest fact in history is God” (Hallock #1010).

## 2. Man’s Days Are Numbered

Moses saw a whole generation melting away before his eyes. Familiar faces were disappearing. They were falling like grass before the reaper. “In the evening it is cut down and withereth.” A generation is carried away as with a flood. They disappear as they sleep. Our days are three score and ten, or possibly four score. But we are soon cut off and we fly away. We spend our years as a tale is told -- it interests for a brief span, and passes on as thought passes. James says life is as a vapor.

What is man? The ideas which some have set forth do not encourage self-gory. Physically considered (and some seem to see very little else), man consists of: 10 gallons of water, 24 pounds of carbon, 7 pounds of lime, 1 4/5 pounds of phosphorus, 1/2 teaspoonful of sugar, 4 1/2 teaspoonfuls of salt, some oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, iron enough for one nail, and a few other chemicals.

Others have said that man is a mere “sum of habits, formed in response to stimuli”. “Nothing but the record of the responses of a biochemical entity to terrestrial stimulation” (Harry Elmer Barnes).

We know that man is more than that. Man is a creature of vision. Man sees the unseen, the ideals yet unrealized. He is not like the animal that is moved only by instinct. Man sees God. Moreover he makes the unseen his goal. He enters into a search for a

city whose make and builder is God. Man's real nature is to be found, not in what he is, but in what he is to be. Personality is a sacred thing. Fascism and Nazism do not think so. Man is the mere tool of the state in their eyes. Man is made for a nobler purpose than to be the tools of ambitious dictators.

Man has the power of choice. Whether he permits himself to be the nonentity that some would make him, or whether he will immortalize himself, he must decide. The question is, What will you do with the life you have? It is a brief expanse of time. We need to make it count.

### 3. Man Has Need of Wisdom

Moses then realized that if a great mistake is not to be made, one needs wisdom. So, he prayed, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom".

Today the forces of Hitler are continuing to advance. They win. They have been winning all along. But we believe that he will eventually lose. We cannot believe that such cold, calculating cruelty, duplicity, determination to crush democracy and Christianity, can ultimately triumph.

A man with a long criminal record wrote his life story under the heading "You cannot win". The Caesars, Napoleons, Mussolinis, and Hitlers defeat themselves.

Watts, English artist of the last century, has a picture in London, entitled: "Six transit Gloria Mundi" (So the glory of the world passes.) A shrouded figure lies on a bier in a chamber of death. Life here is over. What has it amounted to? On the ground around, we see the things for which the man had lived: armor, denoting that he was a warrior; a rose, he has loved; an ermine cloak -- he was honored; a musician's lute and book -- he had culture; a golden cup -- he drank of the rich wine of life. The artist sums it all up in these lines --

"What I spent, I had.  
What I saved, I lost.  
What I gave, I have."

If you like antiques, and just want to look at them, go to a place like the Oriental institute of Chicago. There you see articles made as long ago as 5,000 years. Some of the things came from Ur of the Chaldees, articles of one character or another. There they lie, objects of curiosity to a few.

While people in Ur were making these objects, there was a man by the name of Abram who left his native land and went out to found a great nation, one through which the nations of the earth would be blessed. He started a stream to course down the ways of history.

Who made the brief span more significant? those who remained at home or Abraham?

You and I can live for the small little things that take up our day. But what will it all amount to ninety years from now? People have come and gone in Minden. Some have lent their efforts to things that passed as soon as they left the scene. Others live on in minds made better by their presence. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Those are nameless individuals who ninety years ago formed the first congregation of the Minden Presbyterian Church. But they set in motion a movement that has been a radiating center of wholesome influences through these nine decades. Others have lent a hand, added to its momentum, and thereby made the world better.

#### 4. Man Desires Establishment

No one wants his life to be futile. But often he devotes it to futile enterprises. We need to devote life to something that will stand.

Moses prayed, “O satisfy us”, “make us glad”, “establish thou the work of our hands upon us”. This is not a prayer that God would bless our own willful way but that he would direct our labors so that they will stand. The tasks that seem commonplace may be rich in significance. It is by the commonplace that characters are carved, and institutions supported.

The gates of Hell will not prevail against the church. If you want to be lined up with the winners, cast your lot with the church.

The only sure ground on which man can hope to be established is set forth in the very first verse: God must be our home. All else passes, but God alone is eternal. “In him we live and move and have our being.” God provides what a home provides: love, security, provisions, happiness, refuge, hiding place, shelter.

## Things in Life that Endure

American Legion Memorial Service, Minden, LA  
Smyrna Church, Smyrna, Louisiana  
Rockdale, TX

November 8, 1936  
November 22, 1936  
December 29, 1957 (rewritten)

“We spend our years as a tale that is told” (“Our years come to an end like a sigh”--RSV).

Psalm 90:9

The ancient psalmist, perhaps Moses, reflected on the eternity of God’s existence and on the fleetingness of human life. This latter fact he set forth in several figures. Man is like a bit of flotsam and jetsam on a sweeping flood. “Thou carriest them away as with a flood” (“Thou dost sweep men away--RSV). They are like a dream (RSV), he says. He changed the figure to grass, which is fresh in the morning, but withered in the evening. Another comparison is to a “tale that is told” (a thought, a sigh, a breath).

Before the days of books and printed pages, the storyteller was a person of great importance. Literature was transmitted by word of mouth. Great poems were carried in memory, and told and retold. Travelers say that the storyteller is still an interesting person in oriental life. They say that he can still be seen in the camps of the Arabian desert. In a Bedouin camp circle, the storyteller is the central attraction. He adapts his gesture, voice, and manner to the story which he is telling. He is now monotonous, now enthusiastic, now frantic, now calm. Soon the tale is told and the lights are out. All is then still and quiet.

Is this what the psalmist had in mind? It could be. He had often been in such circles. Afterwards in reflecting, he thought that life is like that. There is a brief spell of interest and then comes the end.

### Life Itself is Brief

The fact that life is transitory, ephemeral, is in the mind of the psalmist. It seems that there are several possible translations of the Hebrew word “hegeh” -- a meditation, a sigh, thinking out loud, a passing utterance, a story.

A very interesting rendering is found in the Septuagint. About 200 years before Christ, the Old Testament, written originally in Hebrew, was translated into Greek, probably in Egypt. This was the version used in the days of Christ. It varies very often from the Hebrew. Students have wondered where the translators got their authority for their variations. Usually the idea is retained, even though the phraseology is different. Take for instance, our text. The Septuagint rendering is, we spend our years “as years are like cobwebs wiped away”. How suggestive that is! A web on which a spider has spent much effort is so easily swept away.

You recall that the same idea is set forth in other figures. James asked, "What is your life?" and then proceeded to answer his own question: "It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (4:14).

The same idea seems to have been in the mind of Thomas Gray (1716-1771), an English poet, in whose "Elegy written in a Country Church Yard", appear these familiar lines:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

#### Life Need Not be Meaningless

Let us hasten to observe that the psalmist does not limit himself to this melancholy observation -- that life is brief and fleeting. He starts out by saying that God has been "our dwelling place". His prayer is that God will "teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom". In other words, the brevity of life should be an incentive to resolute effort, in the expectation that God will establish the work of our hands upon us.

Life may be "like a tale that is told", but stories have their value. They have a large part to play in the training of children and in shaping the lives of adults. There is no story that equals the story of a human life. Emerson observed, "There is properly no history, only biography" (Essay on History).

Stories vary in character. Some are good and others seem to have nothing to commend them. Doubtless you have started to read a recent novel and then laid it aside, as did a person I know, with the remark, "That book isn't worth the paper it is printed on". A vast number of stories written never get printed. They must be poor indeed if they are poorer than some that are printed.

But who can estimate the value of a great story. There are stories of great lives, stories like the fables of Aesop or the parables of our Lord.

Be it so that life is a thought: thoughts rule the world. The greatest things that man can bequeath to his heirs are great thoughts. Pascal says, "Man is but a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed".

Life is even a vapor, as James would have it. Be it so. What is vapor? It is a pearly raindrop that fell from the sky and made beautiful the flower in whose heart it lay. It fell to the ground, sand down, came out again as a spring, flowed singing towards the sea, turning the wheels of industry as it went. There in the great deep, it bore ships to distant ports. Then it is caught up again into the heavens, where the rays of the sun reveal its prismatic splendor. And so, into that estate of glory it vanquishes, fragrant with the

odor of the flower, radiant with the honor of thirsts it quenched, and jubilant over the service it has rendered. Let it be so, that live is “even a vapor”.

Then, Thomas Gray did not state the case correctly. The paths of life do not lead merely to the grave. Longfellow states it better:

“Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal:  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.”

### Qualities that Endure

On Veterans Day (November 11) back in 1954, a reporter was rummaging in the basement of the criminal courts building in Dallas, and discovered a plaque nearly hid in piles of scrap metal and lumber shavings -- a plaque that used to hang in the county courthouse, honoring the 14 Dallas County men who died at Pearl Harbor. Some years ago, it seems, the plaque disappeared from the wall -- no one knew when or why. The reporter brushed off the debris of years and read: “Heroes of Dallas County who sacrificed their lives on the altar of freedom”. He brushed off more dust and read: “You will live forever in our memory”.

When the psalmist prayed, “Establish thou the work of our hands upon us”, he wasn’t thinking of the perpetuation of plaques, statues, memorials. Some of the greatest men never have recognition. But we may be sure that the All-Seeing Eye takes notice of true worth, and gives it eternal significance.

There are certain things which we would like to know about any life, for they are the things that count:

#### 1. What was its purpose?

It is sometimes said of some person that “he meant well”. The implication is that such person has been a failure. It could be that such is not the case.

Let us not forget that potentiality counts as well as actuality. You recall that God gave David credit for a great undertaking which he never achieved. He wanted to build a temple to the glory of God. He was not permitted to do it. But God said, “It is well that I was in thine heart” (1 Kings 8:18).

Strange as it may sound, it is our aspirations and ideals that will measure us. Our good intentions are our glory. It is the greatest heritage we can learn.

#### 2. What effort does it record?

The question is not, What success was achieved? for succeeding as people usually judge it may be unworthy. One may have success at the price of honor. One may sell his soul for a name; his birthright for a mess of pottage.

The question is, What evidence did one give of earnestness in his purpose? He had a purpose: what did he do about it? Did he hold himself to that purpose? or did he digress, as many a storyteller is tempted to do? How much did nonessentials take up his time and sap his energies?

It is not a question of how long one lived, but of how much one crowded into the years he did live.

Sir Thomas More was an English statesman of the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century. His was one of many heads that Henry VIII took off. While More was a prisoner in the Tower of London, someone suggested that he badly needed a shave. He replied: "There is a controversy between the king and myself as to my head; and until that be settled, I will take no trouble with it".

The brevity and uncertainty of life should not keep us from throwing ourselves diligently into the present activity.

It is said that on Riverside Drive, New York, near Grant's Tomb, is a gravestone bearing the inscription, "To an Amiable Child". This little life, though brief, left a contribution that was felt.

### 3. What was its character?

This naturally follows from the foregoing. One has purpose: he engages in a series of deeds with that purpose in mind: the result is that certain habits are built up which form character.

Some people are greater in their postmortem influence than in their conscious efforts. The greatest lives are not fully appreciated while they are being carved out. Take our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the greatest of people died a martyr's death.

Back in 1926, the bodies of two well known persons in the United States lay in state -- those of Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard University, and Rudolph Valentino, movie star. The Shreveport Times took occasion to comment on the fact editorially. This paper observed that great crowds came to view the remains of the movie star, while but few relatively gathered for the rites of the educator. But, said the editor, in years to come the movie star will be forgotten, but the name of Eliot will be regarded as one of the greatest in history.

"Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate,  
Still achieving, still pursuing;  
Learn to labor and to wait."

## Wise Ways for Numbered Days

Minden, LA	December 31, 1922
Doyline High School (Commencement)	May 16, 1926
Dubberly High School (Commencement)	May 16, 1926 (3 PM)
Colonial Presbyterian, Dallas, TX	July 13, 1947 (revised)
Rockdale High School (Commencement)	May 23, 19354 (rewritten)

“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Psalm 90:12

The 90<sup>th</sup> Psalm is ageless. It was written by Moses, but it is strangely modern. A portion of it at least is read over the caskets of our dead. It is really a message for those just beginning responsible living. Lofty in thought, simple in style, majestic in diction, magnificent in imagery, it has been cited as one of the most sublime compositions in all literature.

It begins with a contrast between the eternity of God and the transitoriness of men (vv. 1-6). The reason for man’s transitoriness is his sin. True, man may get to be 70 or 80 years of age, but all that he ever boasts of (health, strength, honor, riches) soon passes away. “Instruct us,” he prays, “to number our days in such a way that we may acquire a heart of wisdom”.

Wisdom is a very desirable possession. Who doesn’t wish that he had more of it than he does? Even though one’s idea of just what wisdom is may be vague, he feels highly complimented if another should credit him with having it. Questions which we might ask are, What is wisdom? What value does wisdom have? How does one come to have it?

Wisdom, as we use the term today, is the “ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts, especially as they relate to life and conduct” (Webster). The old Hebrew would go a bit further than that and maintain that wisdom involves a moral principle which is rooted in God from whom all true understanding emanates.

### Our Need of Wisdom

Few will dissent from the oft-repeated observation that there is a great need at this time for a return to sanity -- sanity in our mode of life, in highway traffic, in moral principles, in economic policies, in international relationships.

If the hydrogen bomb is anything like what it is reported to be, perhaps the statement of a boy in college, in a letter home, has some justification. He wrote that by going to R.O.T.C. in the summer, he would be able to obtain a commission as an officer in the service. “But,” he observed, “what matter will that make? From all accounts the next war will last only five minutes anyway.”

We ought to pause constantly and think on our ways. We may do this on anniversaries, at the beginning of a year, on the Sabbath in the sanctuaries, or at the close of school.

During the years of study in school, you have acquired quite a bit of knowledge. Do you know what you are going to do with it? W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's in London for many years, said: "There never was a time when we had more facts; there never was a time when we had fewer principles to guide us in the use of facts". H. G. Wells, an English writer who passed on about 8 years ago, said, "Science is a rich uncle who has brought to the nursery more toys than the children know what to do with".

That the counsel of the psalmist is timely is apparent from the news reports of the day. Many youths are wrecking their lives by escapades, by impetuous feats of adventure which flout the law. A blight on one's record may never be erased. Lawlessness and crime stalk throughout the land. The moral tone of even "good" people is low. We are facing a crisis in character. We need a generation of young men and women who will lead the way to common sense, which is not as common as we wish it were.

Each one of us should grow wiser with the passing years. We may come to know more, but are really no wiser because we do not stop to reflect on our experiences and to derive good from them.

William Cowper (koo-per), an English poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, has some lines like these:

"Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,  
Have oftentimes no connection. Knowledge dwells  
In heads replete with thoughts of other men;  
Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own.  
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,  
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,  
Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,  
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.  
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;  
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."

#### The Wisdom of Acquiring Knowledge

There is no merit in ignorance, although I have seen people who seemed to be proud of their empty-headedness. I have known politicians who campaigned for office with the use of bad grammar, purposely, and with jests about educated people. That procedure is not as effective as it once was. The modern office seeker promises to do more for the school system in order that every boy and girl in the land can get a good education.

We have outgrown another idea. A certain period of life, from six to twenty-one, was once regarded as the time for getting an education. If, for any reason, one did not get his education in that period, he was doomed to a life of ignorance. We know now that getting an education is a lifetime job. We need to be learning more and more with each passing year. Diplomas do not mark the completion of education.

Only yesterday, I read that a distinguished professor in a Memphis College (C. L. Townsend, of Southwestern), with numerous degrees, is retiring after a teaching career of about 40 years. What is he going to do in his retirement? He is going back to Cambridge, MA and take some additional courses in Harvard University.

Even though deprived of the opportunity to acquire formal education and win diplomas, one can still become educated. Mark Twain, Joel Chandler Harris, and James Whitcomb Riley never went to college. But they embraced what opportunities they had.

Edmund Burke, that able and learned Englishman whom American came to know through his speech on Conciliation delivered in 1775, once said that all admiration rests upon ignorance, his idea being that when we come to understand a thing we cease to have admiration for it. This is in a measure true. But let no one think that admiration will ever cease in the world. While we may cease to wonder at some things, we come to understand, we come upon others who wonder at that which we never knew existed. The more we know of the universe the greater occasion we have to wonder.

So, the prayer might be: "So teach us to number our days that we may store our minds with knowledge".

### The Wisdom of a Right Philosophy of Life

One's philosophy of life might be said to be the underlying principle by which he relates his knowledge to the activities and aims of existence. It is by this philosophy that one explains the phenomena or facts of life, and justifies his course in life.

Not everyone has a clear aim or purpose in life. So many people are at sea. They do not act wisely because they do not know where they are headed. They have no rules by which to govern their choices.

For ages on ages men have sought to know what is the good life. How can man achieve the highest satisfactions of life? Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno and other ancients wrestled with this question and gave answers. The search has continued down to our day. The Irish poet, John Boyle O'Reilly has given us these interesting lines:

“What is the real good? I ask in musing mood.  
Order said the court, knowledge said the school.  
Truth said the wise man, pleasure said the fool;  
Love said the maiden, beauty said the sage;  
Freedom said the dreamer, equity said the sage;

Fame said the soldier, equity said the seer.  
Spake my heart full sadly, the answer is not here.  
Then within my bosom softly this I heard,  
Each heart holds the secret -- kindness is the word."

(Quoted by Dr. Sweets: "Planning the G. L.")

The good life is best achieved by obedience to the two great commandments which our Lord brought to the attention of the young lawyer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31).

A measure of satisfaction comes from bodily health, material comforts, social positions, worldly attainments. But they can all take wings and leave us without warning. The good life is a thing of the spirit. It is not self-centered.

### The Wisdom of Serious Planning and Timely Action

Man reveals his superiority over other animals in his ability to think and plan intelligently. Man can change his environment, and his manner of life. Air-conditioning may change the face of the globe. Man has done a lot of planning of his physical and material interests. Disease is being combated. Life is being lengthened. Material comforts and conveniences are being multiplied.

But the real vital factor of life has been neglected by most of us. We have not put first things first. Because the spiritual part of man cannot be seen, it is overlooked. But it is by that unseen factor that life is molded.

I do not believe that simply sitting down and reflecting on the smallness of the number of our days will necessarily result in a wise course in life. It will help, I am sure. The psalmist places his hope in God, to whom he prays. This reminds one what James says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (1:5).

We need to make the prayer: "So teach us to appreciate the blessing we have that we may apply our hearts to wisdom". The trouble with most of us is that we do not know how well off we are. Factors which mean everything to us may not be with us long. It is not until we lose our friends that we appreciate them most.

The story of Carlyle and his wife, Jane Welsh, is classic. Despite Carlyle's impatience and bluntness with her, Jane was a faithful wife for many years. She died, and the light of his life went out. In his diary, he wrote: "Oh, that I had you yet for five minutes by my side, that I might tell you all". Then he afterwards wrote: "Cherish what is dearest while you have it near you, and wait not till it is far away. Blind and deaf that we are, O think: if thou yet love anybody living, wait not till death sweep down the paltry little dust clouds and dissonance of the moment, and all be made at least so mournfully clear and beautiful, when it is too late".

It is not too easy to see opportunity and to appreciate it as such, when it comes knocking at our doors. Opportunities do not tarry. Golden gates swing open on occasion. If we delay entering, they shut. Then only walls loom up before us. Shakespeare calls these rare moments “tides in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, lead on to fortune”.

“So teach us to see our opportunities that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

“O Thou who dost the vision send  
And gives to each his task,  
And with the task sufficient strength,  
Show us thy will we ask;  
Give us a conscience bold and good,  
Give us a purpose true,  
That it may be our highest joy,  
Our Father’s work to do.”

-- Jay T. Stocking

### The Wisdom of Reliance on God

One cannot read the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm without getting the impression that the psalmist thought life apart from God was disastrous. “Lord, thou hast been our home in all generations”. The 91<sup>st</sup> psalm begins: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and the noisome pestilence.”

A New York minister (J. Stanely Durkee) once in a sermon in old Plymouth Church, related the following incident:

There was a storm at sea, wild and fierce. A great ship was laboring heavily, her engine forcing her into the teeth of the gale. So long was the storm and so terrific was its force that the nerves of the passengers began to give way. Huddled in the great saloon of the ship, the terrified passengers wept, prayed, screamed, when it looked as if the great ship would be buried under of the great waves, never to rise again. At the climax of the panic, the captain of the ship suddenly stood in the doorway. The passengers saw him and became silent. He advanced to the center of the saloon and stood by one of the supporting posts -- a strong, weather-beaten sailor, with a suggestion of a smile on his calm, masterful face. He spoke to them in a calm voice. He told them of the many similar storms through which he and his ship had come. He said that the machinery was working perfectly and not a strain was manifest in the ship. He said that already the barometer was rising and the fury of the gale would soon be spent, then he added, “We will trust in God and our good ship, and He will bring us through”. The panic was over. The people were quiet, and were themselves once more. Their fears were stilled.

Remember, my friends, that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”.

## Measuring the March of Time

Anniversary Sunday, Minden, LA  
Devotional, Conference Directors, Ferncliff, AK  
Anniversary Sermon, Colonial Church, Dallas, TX  
Chilton Presbyterian Church, Chilton,

November 1, 1936  
December 10, 1936  
November 19, 1944  
January 2, 1949

“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Psalm 90:12

In the course of our life, we have frequent occasion to reflect on the fact that “time marches on”. Our inclination is to settle down into a certain routine and attitude. But inevitably there is thrust before us, ever and anon, the grim reminder that life is not static, that nothing is stable in this visible world. Each succeeding day, we live in a world that is different from that of the preceding day. We are ourselves different -- in strength, experience, character, spirit, outlook.

Often we are tempted to exclaim with Ralph Hodgson --

“Time, you old gypsy man,  
Will you not stay?  
Put up your caravan,  
Just for one day?”

But it will not stay. It moves on steadily towards the eternal ends of creation.

It was this great realization that came to the ancient psalmist. No doubt, it was Moses who, under the inspiration of God’s disclosure of truth, wrote one of the oldest psalms, and probably the most sublime. In this great utterance, which we know as the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm, we are told that God has ever been our home, that there is a timelessness about the great I AM, but that human life is fleeting, like the flower of the field that endures but for a day. Man’s life is but 70 or 80 years. How important it is that he should take this into consideration and put into those years the very best effort of which he is capable. “So teach us to number our days -- to consider the brevity of our span of life -- that we may gain a heart of wisdom”. The inference is that life is measured by more than length. Something more must be put into the span of our existence if it is to have value.

A popular program on screen and radio has the impressive utterance as its mark of identification. “Time marches on”. But merely that declaration would not be impressive. It is the recountal of events that have taken place while time marches on that is important, and that lends interest to the program. With the endless round of events, there comes ever before us, in kaleidoscopic fashion, the vision of an ever changing condition and circumstance of life.

We take occasion today to observe that in the life of a church “time marches on”. A perusal of the history of Colonial Church reveals the fact that through some 55 or 56 years it has followed a rather tortuous path through lights and shadows, heights and depths, warmth and chill. We are pausing today, on the even of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a splendid era, to give thanks, to reflect and take courage. How ought we to measure our days?

### Considerations in a Proper Measurement

1. We cannot disregard the element of time, the length of our days. In a rapidly developing section of the country, 55 years is a rather long period of time. I judge that Dallas had in 1888 some 30,000 people. This was back in the days when government revenue exceeded its expenditures. One of the problems then was knowing what to do with the surplus. The days of the tariff and free silver issues. Then followed the “gay nineties”. The evidences of frontier life were to be seen on every hand in Dallas and all Texas.

Under such conditions, this church had its beginning. That is significant. It is sometimes maintained that a child born under trying conditions has more endurance than a child born under less rigorous circumstances. This church has been no hothouse plant.

I think now of some massive live oaks, covered with Spanish Moss that I have seen in Louisiana. The element of time is essential to the development of strength and endurance. You have more faith in business institutions that have a long period of existence to their credit. You feel that you can pin your faith to them. It is proof that they have values that will stand the test of changing conditions. So with families. The further back they reach in continuity of principle and ideal, the more worthy are they of veneration and esteem.

So, then, it is, after all, what the long period of existence might be a proof of, rather than the long period itself, that gives that significance.

We have been reading lately of the celebration of golden marriage anniversaries. Two people living together for 50 years, some longer, feel that it is something to be rejoiced in. The question of great moment is, however, what went into those years? Is the world better off because of that long union of two lives?

So, also, should we ask even of a church.

2. We should be interested to know how broad the church has been in those years. It may have been a very narrow path that the church followed for these 55 years.

Unquestionably there is a value in restriction of one’s interests. We may be so scattering in application of effort that amount to nothing in any particular matter. Jack of all trades and good at none. The tendency has been to specialize in these days. Chas. Reynolds Brown tells of a man who limited his study to Greek nouns, and decided at the close of his career that he had tried to cover too much territory. He regretted that he had not limited his study to the Dative case. He is a man without music, pictures, philosophy, religion.

There are people in the business world who become material minded. They are just as narrow minded as some religionists, but in a different sphere. Zacchaeus saw that he was so, and took steps to avoid such a fate.

A church can be narrow -- narrow in its interests, in its sympathies, in its program, in its contacts with life. One church goes after members. It wants to tell about how many accessions it has had to the church during the year. But it may utterly neglect those whom they bring into the church. A church may be narrow in the sense that it cannot cooperate with other churches in a community program of general moral and religious welfare. A church may be narrow in the program of general moral and religious welfare. A church may be narrow in the sense that its efforts are all self-absorbed. The energies of the workers in the church are absorbed in keeping the rest of the members in a good humor. A church may declare that it has no interest in missions, or the other outside activities of the denomination.

As our church came down these 55 years, has it been a church of wide interests and sympathies, with a program of education, service, worship, fellowship, and inspiration?

3. There should also be depth in our existence. We may be broad without being deep. One can be so broad in his beliefs that he has no depth. If a church has nothing but breadth, it will soon have no reason for existence.

Probably this quality is needed today more than any other. We need a deep abiding conviction in the church regarding that which is vital and fundamental. It may be that the church is in danger of becoming more a social club than an army.

Questions should be in our minds, as we look at our past. Has our church plowed deep down this furrow of 35 years' length? Has it stood fearlessly for high moral principle? for the truth? for Christ? for the gospel? Or has it wasted its energies in advocacy of trivialities? To what extent has the church seemed indispensable in the life of its members? To what extent has it claimed the affections of those who come and go? Has it ministered vitally to human hearts? to the life of the community, to the world at large? Has it been a part of the basic foundation of the community's progress and standards of life?

How deep has been its existence?

4. There should be in these 55 years an upward trend. The curve of its successive steps should turn upward. This would be due to the fact that aims were high, that its ideals were lofty, that its plans were large. We have often been told that after all that is the true measure of life. We are to be judged, not by what we do as compared with what someone else does. What one man does is not to be put down beside that which someone else does and judged accordingly. We are to be judged by what we aspired to do and what we would have done had our conditions been favorable.

There has been growth, but has the growth been commensurate with our opportunities? Has there been improvement in our methods of work? There has been improvement in our physical equipment. Has there been improvement in the type of personality shaped here? Have our plans been large enough?

## Looking Forward to a Course of Wisdom

The prayer of Moses as expressed in our text is forward-looking. "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We justify the backward look that we may have the proper forward-look. Certain characteristics seem to belong to a course of wisdom:

1. Confidence, born of remembrance of the past and our faith in God. We do not know what lies before us. It would be risky to speak as with authority regarding what may take place. The Expositor (7/31, p. 1082) relates that Admiral Byrd was once asked to make predictions regarding the future of aviation. He declined, citing two instances as a warning: One from a newspaper in 1839: "The railroad cannot succeed because of two definite shortcomings: first, it cannot go uphill, and second, not enough people want to go anywhere in a hurry to make it pay." The other appeared in print in 1897: "The automobile cannot possibly succeed because of two inherent defects: first, its engine will always be so unreliable that the average citizen will not tolerate the delay and inconvenience sure to arise; second, there will never be sufficient funds to build level roads permitting travel at high speed".

There will doubtless be great material changes. Television will come for the masses. Crop conditions will become more stable. Other things will come. But the same old human nature will continue.

The church has continued on down through the centuries changing its method as the times demand. Many times the funeral oration over the church has been uttered. But the church has lived on. In 50 year old volumes of the Atlantic Monthly and the North American Review, we find statements that sound modern enough:

"Protestantism stands today breast deep in torrents of skepticism which itself hath let loose which are deepening around it, and in which it is drowning; it stands there today aghast and incompetent."

"The church is now for the most part a depository of social rather than religious influences. The disintegration has proceeded rapidly. Its chief force is no longer religion. The small minority of sincere believers are mournfully conscious that the old religious life has departed from the church.

"The morality based upon the religion which is popularly professed has broken down. Multitudes of men who are religious are not honest or trustworthy.

"A collapse of religious belief, of the most complete and tremendous kind, is apparently now at hand...The crust of outward piety is hollow, and growing hollower every day.

"Protestantism has failed...No Protestant community ever succeeded in laying down a chart of human life with any definite sailing directions. In every corner of the world there is the same phenomenon of the decay of established religions."

We feel towards the church as certain passengers felt about a vessel storm-tossed at sea. The winds and the waves were wild and fierce. The ship was laboring heavily. Her engines were forcing her into the teeth of the gale. It was a long and trying storm. The nerves of the passengers were on edge. Huddled in the great saloon, they wept and prayed, and began to scream, as the great ship plowed into a wave and seemed to sink never to rise again. At the climax of the situation, the captain suddenly stood in the doorway. He advanced to the center of the room and stood by one of the supporting posts -- a strong, weather-beaten sailor, a suggestion of a smile on his face, masterful in every line. His voice was calm. He told them of the many storms through which his ship had come. He informed them that the engines were working in perfect order, and that not a strain was manifest in the ship. He said that the barometer was rising and that the fury of the gale would soon be spent. Then he said, with a touch of emotion, "We will trust in God and our good ship, and He will bring us through."

"O where are kings and empires now  
Of old that went and came?  
But Lord, thy church is standing yet,  
A thousand years the same.

Unshaken as the eternal hills,  
Immovable she stands,  
A mountain that shall fill the earth,  
A house not made with hands."

2 Vision. We need to push up our ideals, and raise our standards of work. We need to make our plans large for the future. Greater goals, larger service, nobler standards, higher principles. We must not cease to dream. Getting the church is not enough. We must learn better how to do the Lord's work.

3. Consecration. There must be a willingness on the part of the people to give of their best to the Master. The church must not be an appendix to life. It must enter into the warp and woof of it.

Our prayer of the morning should be that of the Psalmist: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"...Establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea the work of our hands establish thou it."

Insert

We hear much about the "old time religion", and we need some of it. But it was far from ideas as it was actually lived. We are confronted on every hand by claims that "an old fashioned revival" is being conducted. But I have had association with such revivals, and those left much to be desired. We cannot turn the clock back. Our look should be ahead. I feel that the revival of the future will not be patterned after the revivals of the past.

Changes are constantly taking place -- in community social life, in economic conditions, in personnel, in dominant interests. But there are some things that never change. The laws governing the universe do not change, physical or moral. It is still true that as a man sows so does he reap; that where one's treasure is there will his heart be also; that we cannot serve God and Mammon.

Some trace the indifference of church members to the program of the church to prosperity, even when the peril of loved ones would seem to constrain people to come to church. I have heard members of this church observe (and that observation seems to be borne out by the facts) that the best times in the history of this church were the times of depression. There was a panic in the early nineties (1893). Then soon after the frame building was occupied on this lot, there was another panic in 1907. These times of stress and strain were passed through successfully. But it could not survive a wartime condition similar to the present in 1917 and 1918. New life came after the collapse of 1920, resulting in the reorganization in 1924. The depression came in 1930. I judge from what I am told that the very best years in point of organizational achievement came during the hard years of the depression. We are back now in a condition that is like that of 1918. Will history repeat itself? Will we have to wait for another depression before we can go forward?

## When Labor is to Pray

Minden, LA

September 6, 1931

“Establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.”  
Psalm 90:17

I do not feel that I can be mistaken when I say that this sprayer of Moses for success to crown the labor of hands voices the desire of many millions throughout the land today. There is distress when one does not have an opportunity to labor with his hands and head. But there is even greater distress when a man finds that, even after he has labored, he will get nothing for it. Reports have it that our nation has produced the greatest wheat crop in years -- measured in terms of hundreds of millions of bushels, on which, if sold at 35 or 40 cents a bushel, will create a loss of 10 or 15 cents a bushel to the producer. It is said that we have something like 16,500,000 bales of cotton, and a carry over of something like 9,000,000 bales, which, if sold now would bring less than 5 cents per pound. How the men and women who have labored to produce this, and the hundreds of other commodities on the market today, would like to have the labor of their hands established on a solid basis by some great factor -- either human or divine.

There have been times when the labor of hands was a fair assurance of a livelihood. Men were skilled in the various lines of employment, and their services were sought. But in these latter days, the machine has replaced skilled labor. The result is that the work is done better and much more rapidly, and that fewer men are needed in the position of laborers. The result is that men are everywhere out of employment. The number of unemployed this next winter, according to the American Federation of Labor, will be about 7,000,000.

Men have offered various remedies for the condition. Some have contended that machines have been a detriment and that they should be discarded, in order that we might return to the old plan of using men and women. But that is not a good suggestion. It will not work. The only proper thing for us to do is to adapt ourselves to the changing conditions. This is exceedingly difficult in the period of depression. But it will become easier with the return of better times.

What is to be done, if the prayer of the laborer that the work of his hands may be established?

### 1. Forms of Employment Assurance.

The feeling has grown that there should be some form of guarantee of a livelihood given the workers of the nation. But if you were to ask me by whom this guarantee should be made, I would be unable to take a hand in the matter, and make provision. But this should be the last resort, which is apparent from the sad plight in which England and Germany find themselves today as a result of their systems of relief.

We must not forget that the capitalistic form of government is on trial today. There are other forms bidding the sanction of the American people -- Communism and Fascism. It is because of that fact that our nation has felt constrained to help Germany at this time. There the battle rages more acutely. Mr. Hoover, on June 15, in Indianapolis, said in a speech, that "reparation is necessarily wholly a European question, in which we have no interest". But five days later, he made his now famous moratorium proposal, which was an acknowledgement that we did have a very vital interest in the situation.

Under the present capitalistic system, there is in this country extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth. In a statement given out by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the assertion is made that 1% of the property owners of the nation held 33% of the wealth (in 1929 -- that latest available figures). 10% held 64%. It states further that there were, according to income tax returns, 504 persons who had an income of one million dollars or over, and that 36 of these had incomes of 5 millions or over. The average income of the 36 was over 9 millions 7 hundred thousand each.

This statement also contains the information that since 1825 our country has had 20 business depressions, eight of which were major economic disturbances. We may be sure that after this has passed, another will sooner or later come in its place. That man has learned something by these experiences of the past is evident from the protection which they seek in time of plenty for the time of want.

Business has addressed itself to preparation for these times of emergency, by laying aside reserves. In 1930, for instance, when unemployment was severe, corporations paid dividends of \$318,600,000 in excess of those paid the previous year of 1929. But there was a decrease as much as 29% in amount of factory payrolls. Thus stockholders have been protected against the time of depression. Why should not the labor be also protected, as it was he who helped to make the dividends?

We find two extreme attitudes in the world today. One is that property should belong only to those whose hands have produced it, and that the possession of wealth by any others is the evidence of theft. The ills that have followed the experiment in this theory are witnesses to the fact that something is wrong with our attitude. What the socialist might mean in making the prayer, "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us" is that he might have the dividends which he produces, whereas in fact he may have an exaggerated conception of what he did produce.

The other attitude, equally erroneous, is that individuals have a right to all the wealth that they can manage to accumulate, without any feeling of responsibility towards those whose hands by actual labor produced that wealth. Producers and workers are the very foundation of our economic structure, and it is rank injustice to treat them as dependents and hangers on in times of depression. Any concern that is dependent upon labor for its dividends should be as careful to safeguard the interests of its labor as it now is to safeguard the interests of its stockholders. It is now conceded that the worker is entitled to a living wage, but that is generally meant enough to purchase the necessities of life. But I think I can see that in the future this conception will be extended to include the

whole range of life -- for a man's working period is on the average, probably, about one half of his life period.

The proper attitude towards wealth is that taught us in the Word of God -- that wealth is a trust which is not the exclusive possession of either the capitalist or the laborer. It is God's, and we are but stewards of any amount that may be in our hands. The acceptance of this conception of possessions will help a man to be fair and just in the uses of which he puts what he has. The most notable example of the adoption of this attitude is that of the late John J. Egan, of the American Cast Iron and Pipe Co., of Birmingham, AL (See *Royal Partnership*, by Melvin).

## 2. Proper Attitude of the Worker to his Work

The idea seems to prevail that the object of life is to make money, with the hope that the time will come when one will not have to work. But this is wrong. Work is a blessing, and not a curse. It would be the greatest thing for this country now if work could be found for everybody -- those that want it and that that don't want it. It was never intended that man should be idle. The idle man, even though rich, is to be pitied, not envied.

Sometimes I hear remarks that indicate a thought that the curse on man for his sin is that he has to work. That is not true. When God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, he placed upon him the responsibility of dressing it. After the Fall, God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17). Before the Fall, man was free from fatigue and pain.

The true worker knows the joy of productiveness. The machine has taken away a great deal of this. The cobbler and his shoes, the tailor and his clothes. Things are turned out so rapidly that much of this productiveness becomes a monotony. We are going faster today, but where and why? True workers aim at quality, not quantity; perfection, not profit; beauty, not volume. They are not clock-watchers.

"Give me the man with the sun in his face,  
And shadows all dancing behind;  
Who can meet with reverses, with calmness and grace,  
And never forget to be kind.  
For whether he's sovereign, or merchant, or clerk,  
I have faith in the man who's in love with his work."

A man's work is established upon him in the sense that it molds his life and character. Michelangelo, after secluding himself to produce his David, was found to have a new light in his eye -- a new radiance. His ideal of David had come to his soul and countenance.

Labor, in some quarters, has flouted religion. Workers have denounced the church and all that pertains to religion. But this is a serious mistake. Working men ought of all men to be devout.

1. He needs the guidance of God in finding his place. There is constant need of adaptation to new conditions. Every man needs to find his place in the new order. Men, even the most intelligent, are groping their way. There are problems today that man has been unable to solve. These problems will in time be solved, but that may be too late for us. Every man needs to come to God and ask his guidance in finding his place in the world. "Commit thy way unto the Lord and He shall direct thy paths".

2. The worker needs to work along with God. The help of the heavenly Father is always needed. To the man of faith, to labor is to pray. It attests to the genuineness of oral prayer, for the pray-er has a responsibility in the matter of securing an answer to his prayer. There is little to commend the prayer of a man who asks God to feed his family and himself without his doing what he can to provide the food himself. Labor is faith in action. Plowing the soil, planting the crop, producing merchandise, learning a trade -- is to the man who has committed his way to God, an act of prayer. "He prays best who prays while he works, and works while he prays".

"Rest not content in thy darkness, a clod!

Work -- for some good, be it ever so slowly;

.....

Labor -- all labor is noble and holy

Let thy great deeds be thy prayer to thy God."

-- Osgood

Therefore, when we pray "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us", we pray that we may gather the full fruitage of our efforts. What I have said today is if this is ever to be realized in a capitalistic society, such as that which we have in our country, the Christian attitude must be maintained by two factors in the situation -- capital and labor. In fact, it is coming to be more and more true that individuals belong to both factors, for laborers are coming to be stockholders. 1. There must be a Christian conception of the responsibility in property possessions. 2. The worker must be Christian in his attitude towards his work.

## A Prayer for Permanency

Minden, LA	February 22, 1925
Minden, LA	September 4, 1932
Colonial Church, Dallas, TX	December 29, 1946 (rewritten)
Wilshire, Austin, TX	January 1, 1950
Rockdale, TX	June 7, 1953
Rockdale, TX	September 27, 1959 (rewritten)

“Establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.”

Psalm 90:17

There is no more beautiful and majestic literary composition than the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm. It is thought to be the work of Moses. The wonder of it is that it is still a timely and extensively quoted work.

It begins with the contrast between the eternity and unchangeableness of God and the transitoriness of man (vv. 1-6). The reason for man’s transitoriness is his sin (vs. 7f). But while God is just, he is compassionate, and on the basis of that the psalmist prays that He visit His people (vs. 13f). He prays that God would graciously bless the works of man’s hand, and make them worthwhile and permanent.

There was an English nonconformist minister by the name of Isaac Watts (1674-1748), who is known today for the hymns he composed and which are to be found in Presbyterian hymnals particularly. We think of “Joy to the World, the Lord is Come”, “When I Survey thy Wondrous Cross”, “Alas, and did my Savior bleed,” “Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove”. In fact, he is said to have written about 600 hymns and paraphrases. One which might be classed as a paraphrase is “Our God Our Help in Ages Past”. It is really the 90<sup>th</sup> psalm all over again. The hymn is really very long -- too long for use in our services today. Four of the stanzas are usually printed in our hymnals.

We will limit our thoughts this morning to the last verse of the psalm. For obvious reasons, I think, this passage seems rather pertinent at this particular time. We have occasion just now to pause in our labors and reflect on what has been done towards setting up a church. I consider myself but a spokesman for a group of stalwart souls who have labored for some six years -- some more, some less -- to accomplish a project dear to their hearts.

We have now reached a stage at which we can indulge in retrospect. We feel that ours has been a worthy effort. So, we unite our hearts in a prayer to the God whose glory we seek to exalt, “Establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it”.

## 1. Man Wishes His Efforts Made Significant.

The word which Moses uses is “establish” -- make firm, steadfast, right, permanent. He wants his work given proper basis, wise plan, and proper direction. It is a prayer that God would take efforts conscientiously and honorably put forth and save them from oblivion and ineffectiveness.

This is not a prayer that God would approve and bless a life that has been spent in willful disregard of the wishes of our Lord. Often we do our own will and ask God’s blessing upon it. We may even feel aggrieved if God should fail to bless such undertakings. But we have the right to make this prayer if we have sought to do God’s will. Often it seems that our time is being spent in little matters that border on the inconsequential.

Who has not felt at times that his life is a mass of disconnected deeds? The routine duties of life seem to take all the time there is. We are busy all the time but seem not to round out any constructive achievement. Every conscientious person is going to have that problem. Many calls that cannot be evaded always interrupt. One is never able to do the big thing because of the intrusion of the small things.

We can at least come to God, after a period of conscientious effort, and say, “I have tried to do my best. Now, graciously bless it, establish it.”

## 2. Consideration Must Be Given the Nature of our Deeds.

Notice that it is the “work of our hands” that is asked to be established. We realize the best only by doing. There is nothing to be gained merely by thinking and speculating. As Kingsley wrote: “Do noble things, not dream them all day long”.

Work is the normal function of man. The Adamic curse is really is salvation in many ways. There is the joy of productiveness. We call it the “creative” urge.

An illustration of the kind of thing of which I am speaking is to be found in our church. If promoted from the right motive and in the true Christian spirit, no enterprise is more worthy than the establishment of a church. We have tried to observe the amenities of Christian fraternity in our relationship with our brethren, and we believe we have their good will. We were at least given every encouragement and assistance in getting started. And by the grace of God we have come thus far.

We are well aware of the limitations of our organization and facilities. We have never claimed to offer a newcomer in our midst all the advantages he or she had in the largely, well established churches from which they have come. We have offered gladly the best we had, and experienced a thrill each time a new arrival chose to cast in his lot with us.

We can understand the disappointment some may experience in not finding that our church has certain features of the old home church, or of even some other local church. The temptation is strong to decide to go over and take advantage of the offerings of the larger and older church organizations.

I would like, however, to recall a bit of history. Back in 1952 and 1953, there were some Presbyterians among the personnel who had come to take over the operation of the Rockdale Works of ALCOA. They found no Presbyterian Church. They were given every assurance that they would be welcome in the splendid church groups already organized and equipped. They saw that these groups had much to offer in adequate facilities and congenial personnel. Why not take advantage of that opportunity? That was certainly the easiest course to pursue. They were newcomers to Texas. If Texas Presbyterians had not seen fit to provide them with an inviting religious home, they might as well cast in their lot with those of other faiths who had made such provision. That, I say, could have been their thinking. But, as you well know, it wasn't.

A group got together and agreed that there must be a Presbyterian Church in Rockdale. That was in 1953. The result has been that we now have a fairly sizable group of the loveliest people to be found in any community. Some were frank enough to say that it could not be done; but, bless their hearts, they are the happiest and most loyal members we have, ready to pay their respects to a courageous and intrepid spirit that would not be content to get into processions that were already under way.

It could be that after we got organized and got our building, or part of it, that we let some of our aggressiveness lag. A shifting of personnel at the plant could not but be felt in the church, Some of our most ardent boosters left us. We are well aware of the fact that we do not offer all the advantages of a large church.

It has been our hope that those who come to take the places of those who have gone from us will bring the same intrepid, creative, aggressive spirit of their predecessors. If they do not find what they want and what is vital to the best work of a church, it is our hope that they will emulate the spirit of the early arrivals here and see that we have it. If they do so, they may well make the prayer of the psalmist: "Establish the work of our hands", as you have established the work of others who have gone before us.

### 3. A Primary Value of Deeds Lies in Their Effects on Character.

I do not know that I fully grasp all that is meant in the prayer of the psalmist: "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us".

Does this mean that credit should be given for all that is done? and that that credit be perpetuated down through the course of human history?

The desire to be remembered is well nigh universal. By one means or another people seek to perpetuate their deeds. Foundations are named after people with the idea that so long as such agencies serve the community or the world, their helpful ministry will call to mind the lives of those after whom they are named. Men and women have their names inscribed on documents that promise to be of historic value. Parks and playgrounds and buildings and counties and cities and states and even countries are given

the names of people. The thought of perpetuation of memory is pleasing to the one whose life is thus approved.

It may be that this desire is somehow linked up with the urge of a boy to carve his initials or name in conspicuous places. I have read that somewhere on Natural Bridge, a celebrated structure in Virginia -- 215 feet high, with a span of 90 feet -- are to be found the initials of George Washington, put there by him. But Washington's name has been given distinction in many other ways that are better. He left something better than carved initials. He left a character that is "established".

Before my grandmother's death, she distributed among her grandchildren a few trinkets which meant a great deal to her. They were associated with great moments in her life. She did not seem to understand that we would not see in them what she saw. But she left something else that meant more to us than those mementos. It was her character of rugged, but noble, simplicity.

What we do reacts on character. Acts leave their imprint. Unless one's acts are of the right sort, it is a fearful thing to make the prayer of Moses.

We cannot be too often reminded that we are here to make a life, and the activities that we engage in are the means by which that is done. Calls to service are great opportunities. Instead of sitting down and questioning why we should be called upon to do this or that, we should do our best to meet the demands of the situation.

#### 4. Man is Dependent Upon Outside Appearance for Establishment.

This prayer of Moses is made to God. This shows that he regarded God as essential to his success.

Really, a man's work is not established by his own efforts, or his own planning. "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Psalm 16:9). "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord" (Psalm 37:23).

One John Berridge is said to have composed a stanza and pasted it on his house clock as a continual admonition to himself. It represents the clock as saying --

"Here my master bids me stand,  
and mark the time with faithful hand;  
What is his will is my delight,  
To tell the hours by day and night.  
Master, be wise and learn of me,  
To serve thy God as I serve thee."

Man needs the help of his Master. Paul the man of Tarsus was a learned man. He was misapplying his knowledge and influence. But on the way to Damascus he asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" The outcome of that experience was that he consecrated all to

God's will. God then established the work of Paul's hands in years past. Paul's learning then became an asset in the work that he had to do.

We are saved from futility and the moral scrap heap only by submitting our all to the use and direction of our Lord.

“O keep us building, Master; may our hands  
Ne'er falter when the dream is in our hearts,  
When to our ears there come divine commands  
And all the pride of sinful will departs;  
We build with Thee, O grand enduring worth  
Until the heavenly Kingdom comes to earth.”

## Psalm 91

It is related of Theodore Beza, a contemporary and friend of Calvin's, that, while on a visit to Geneva, he heard this psalm read in the Reformed Assembly. It made a deep and lasting effect upon him. He made it his own psalm. He later returned to Geneva to stay. Was made professor of Theology and president of the college there. He was made Calvin's successor after the latter's death. This psalm is said to have sustained Beza through the dangers and labors of his life.

This is truly a beautiful psalm. The English translators seem to have been at their best here. There is an "indefinable charm and power" in these words. The mere saying of the words produce confidence. The first verse is "one of the jewels of English literature and devotional expression".

### The Structure of the Psalm

It has been thought by some that David was author of this psalm and that it was written during such a pestilence as that which is mentioned in 2 Samuel 24. There is very little authority for such a surmise.

There are different ideas about the idea in the mind of the writer as to the speaker or speakers represented. One idea suggests responsive utterances on the part of three persons, or voices, as follows:

- Voice A: Verse 1
- Voice B: Verse 2
- Voice A: Verses 3-8
- Voice B: Verse 9a (see Revised Version)
- Voice A: Verse 9b-13
- Voice C: Verse 14-16 (This is the voice of Jehovah.)

The probable idea is that the psalmist is at one time speaking of himself, and at another time to himself.

### The Content of the Psalm

The thought of the whole psalm is condensed into the first two verses. There are four different names of God in this verse: The Most High, unapproachable to foes; The Almighty, invincible protector; The Lord, Jahweh, the covenant name; My God, Elohim.

Not the great promises of the psalm:

1. He shall deliver thee...
2. He shall cover thee...
3. Thou shalt not be afraid...
4. It shall not come nigh thee...
5. There shall no evil befall thee...

Notice also the unforgettable phrases:

- The snare of the fowler
- The terror by night
- The arrow that flieth by day
- The pestilence that walketh in darkness
- The destruction that wasteth at noonday

Note the tenderness in, “He shall cover thee with his features, and under his wings shalt thou trust”.

Note the strength in “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler”.

It was from vv. 11 and 12 that the Devil quoted in his temptation of Jesus.

Note the “I wills” in vv. 14-16:

1. I will deliver him...
2. I will set him on high...
3. I will answer him...
4. I will be with him in trouble...
5. I will deliver him and honor him...
6. I will satisfy him with long life, and shew him my salvation...

### The Message of the Psalm

The fundamental thought is that man is always safe who makes God his refuge and defense. It is appropriate to a time of tribulation, war, depression, pestilence, vicissitudes of personal life.

It corresponds to the words of Christ: “Fear not”, “Lo I am with you always”. Of Paul: “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

### The Significance of the Psalm

It is a call to courage and confidence. Crison Swett Marden has the story of a lion cub that was reared in a stockade with sheep and lambs. The relationship was very friendly to all involved, even after the lion grew to enormous size. But one day a magnificent lion, with the breath of the forest in its nostrils, appeared on the horizon and roared a mighty challenge. This struck a response in the young lion, which straightened out its tail and lifted its head, and sniffed the air. A new power was stirred within him. Then with a tremendous leap, he quitted the stockade to join the lion on the horizon. While playing with the lambs, he had been unaware of the latent powers within him.

So man does not know what he is capable of until he has his spirit stirred within him. With a sense of his tremendous strength in God man can go forth to do a mighty work.

People in the past who have been strengthened by the confidence instilled by the psalm have been the people who did the great things of history.

Dr. Egbert Smith tells of an incident taking place during the American Revolution when in a certain battle the wadding for their guns gave out. They were near a church, and ran in and stripped the pews of the hymnbooks. The command of the officer, as he threw the books at the feet of the men, was, "Put Watts into 'em; boys, give 'em Watts" (Creed of Presbyterians, pp. 146-147).

Read Watts' version of this psalm in Psalms and Hymns, no. 336.

### Faith and Fear

Man is beset by fear. It is his greatest foe. He is harassed by fears at every hand. People are outgrowing some fears -- nature, superstition, eclipse, black cats, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>. But there are fears due to sense of inferiority -- due often to physical defect or poverty. Fears bred by defeat -- a child should be led to experience triumph. Fear of ignorance -- the underprivileged is fearful of the privileged, the untraveled fears the traveled, the educated are feared by the uneducated.

Fear seriously handicaps man. Creates timidity, lack of confidence. It creates the thing feared -- catching cold, stampede, war. Fear destroys calm and sober thinking. In time, it will annihilate personality.

Bodily pain -- appendix, kidney trouble, cancer, leprosy

Business fears -- no vacations, no buying, and hence no selling. Suicide.

Social fears -- uneasiness because of social prestige

Domestic fears -- homes ruled by fears

Religious fears -- "Fear" of God. Fearing to join the church, to talk on religion

Fear can be supplemented by faith. Taking this psalm as one's own will make a difference.

"I cannot drift beyond His love and care" (Whittier).

## A Psalm for the Thank Offering

Rockdale, TX

November 23, 1958

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands...”

Psalm 100

If you take your Bible and open it at what you judge to be the center of it, you will very likely find your eye resting on the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm, one of the most beloved of all psalms. It has a title that is very ancient: “A Psalm for the Thank-Offering”. It has been said that among the psalms of triumph and thanksgiving, this stands preeminent. During each Thanksgiving season, it is read from a thousand pulpits, and on each Sabbath morning it is sung in one form or another by thousands of congregations.

Being included in the Hymnbook of the Hebrews, which the Book of Psalms has been from time immemorial, we are sure this 100<sup>th</sup> psalm has been sung in synagogues down through the ages. This collection of 150 psalms was compiled for use in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple. While they have been called the Psalms of David, less than one half of them have been credited to him. This 100<sup>th</sup> psalm had a much later origin.

### A World Wide Summons

The psalm opens with a call to all the earth to render praise to God, the creator and benefactor of men. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands”.

It is this, as much as anything else, that has caused Bible students to think the psalm was produced at a later period of Hebrew history, say after the Babylonian captivity. There is a breadth of vision in this psalm which the earlier Hebrews did not have. The ancients thought of Jehovah as the God of the Israelites -- a sort of tribal God. Doubtless the bitter exile experience broadened the Hebrew outlook and redeemed the Jews from narrow nationalism. After the exile, they still believed themselves to be God’s chosen people, but a people charged with a worldwide responsibility. They no longer claimed that they were the exclusive objects of divine favor. All are the sheep of his pasture.

The spirit of exclusiveness is still with us. We still hear people ask, “Why bother to send missionaries to foreign lands? Those people have their own religions. We have ours.” They forget that Jesus gave his disciples a worldwide vision. It is because of this that we have Christianity ourselves.

The challenge that the psalmist throws out to “all ye lands” is that they unite in worship. Worship is an act of homage or adoration. It is the response of the human heart to God. It is the means by which God becomes real. It satisfies man’s yearning for God.

## The Spirit of Worship

It is interesting to note the words used to describe the exultant spirit which one should have when he comes to worship, and the ways to express it: “Gladness”, “joyful noise”, “singing”, “thanksgiving”, “praise”.

This is not an injunction to make religious worship an emotional debauch. “Holy Rollerism” is detrimental to character, emotional stability, and the good order of the church. But while we pass judgment on this type, we may have a cold formalism that is icily regular and dull. Without the ecstasies and soul stirrings of beauty and mystery there is no life in worship.

In another psalm we read: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord” (122:1). That has expressed the sentiment of millions of people since the psalmist wrote that. Sometimes we find people who, for one reason or another, do not feel that way. One person will plead as a reason a distaste acquired as a child when parents made them attend the services. There have been more who expressed profound gratitude to their parents who trained them in habits of worship. The Sabbath is fast losing its sacredness. It is being filled more and more with outings, travel, homework, concerts, rodeos, fairs, and the like. The exercise of worship has little appeal for the mind that has been preempted by the yen for entertainment.

Singing is an indispensable part of worship. The psalmist evidently had it in mind that all who came to worship should sing, not just the choir and a few members of the congregation. Some people never sing in a worship service. The excuse generally given is that they can’t sing. Another excuse is that they do not know the hymn announced. Very likely, there were some like that among the old Hebrews. But the psalmist left them, and leaves us, without excuse, when he says, “Make a joyful noise”. We can all do that.

A genuinely thankful soul is a happy soul. He is mindful of the good that has come his way through the goodness of God.

The element of joy is essential to the progress of the Kingdom. The world is going to be won to Christ, not by argument, but by the attractiveness of a warmly radiant Christian personality.

Paul and Silas, preaching the gospel in Philippi, were beaten and thrown into prison and bound in stocks. At midnight, they burst into song; and the prisoners heard them, as well as the jailor. When the earthquake came, it was Paul’s calm mastery of the situation that made the religion of Christ so glorious in the eyes of the Philippian jailer. No prisoners had chosen to escape. The jailer came in asking, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved”.

## The Place of Worship

“Enter into his gates”, “enter into his courts”, said the psalmist. This would seem to suggest that he had the Temple in mind. We know that the old Hebrew associated worship with a particular place.

The woman at the well in Samaria, in her conversation with Jesus, brought up the subject of the place of worship. Was the true place Mount Gerizim, as her people claimed; or was it Jerusalem as his people claimed? Jesus told her in effect that Gerizim was nothing, Jerusalem was nothing, but that spirit and truth were everything when it comes to worship. In the words of the hymn --

“They who seek the throne of grace  
Find that throne in every place;  
If we live a life of prayer,  
God is present everywhere.”

But the Bible emphasizes the importance of corporate worship, and experience has established the fact that the spirit of worship is kept at its best just as persons of kindred mind gather and unite their hearts and voices in praise and adoration. In other words, religion is seldom a vital factor in the lives of those who do not go to church.

## The Occasion for Worship

The psalmist makes the point that this Lord to whom he is calling the nations to “make a joyful noise” is God, the one who has made us, the one by whom we are provided with pasturage. “For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations” (RSV).

The goodness of God ought to produce in all of us the spirit of gratitude. It ought, but does it always do so? It looks at times as if the people who have been most signally blest are the least grateful. Time and again, in my ministry, I have seen people who were at one time regular in their church attendance become less and less so as they come to have more and more of this world’s goods.

The emotion of praise is the fruit of pain rather than ease. Prosperity and security seldom provide the spirit of worship. As prosperity and comforts increase, the urge to worship decreases.

Thomas Ken, a minister of England who lived back in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, wrote perhaps the most familiar four lines of English poetry ever written. They are known as the “Doxology”: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”. But Ken lived a life marked by personal trouble and general turbulence. Those were stormy days in England. He was bereft of his parents in his boyhood. After he became a bishop, his refusal to violate his conscience resulted in his imprisonment in the Tower of London. Out of such a background came those immortal lines which embody the sentiment of the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm.

## In Metrical Version

When the Reformers broke with the Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, they had no directory of worship but the Mass Book. They turned to the Psalms for their material. Metrical versions of the psalms soon came to use. Psalters were compiled.

About the middle of the century, Rev. William Kethe, a Scot, fled from the persecution of Mary, Queen of England, and came to Geneva, Switzerland, at that time a sort of rendezvous for reformers. He wrote hymns while there, but only one has survived. It is his metrical version of the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm.

John Day in 1560 decided to include Kethe's version in his Psalter. He found a tune that fitted it, one composed by a musical Frenchman by the name of Louis Bourgeois. The tune, because of its association, came to be called "Old Hundredth". It is the tune sung to the Doxology. Bourgeois' version has a slightly different rhythm. We have it in our hymnal as those reformers sang it 400 years ago.

There have been other versions of the 100<sup>th</sup> psalm, notably one by Isaac Watts, slightly altered by John Wesley: "Before Jehovah's awful throne". But Kethe's version has a notable history, along with the tune with which it has always been associated. There are still some churches which use only psalms in their worship services. In all Presbyterian Hymnals, there are generous supplies of psalms.

We can well imagine that when our Puritan fathers gathered for their Thanksgiving services, as well as on other occasions, they would sing Old Hundredth.

Longfellow in his "The Courtship of Miles Standish" relates that John Alden, after trudging through the Plymouth woods, came within sight and sound of Priscilla's new built home, and, to quote:

"Heard, as he drew near the door, the musical voice of Priscilla  
Singing the hundredth psalm, the grand old Puritan anthem."

Let us join our voices today with those of 400 years ago, and with those of the generations since, and sing "Old Hundredth", in praise and thanksgiving to him whose steadfast love endures forever.

## The Significance of Thanksgiving

Minden, LA

November 30, 1933

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”

Psalm 103:2

Archbishop Trench is quoted as saying that there is, or was, in Brazil a tribe in whose language there was no word for “thanks”, and that the idea is foreign to the members of that tribe.

There are individuals living under more enlightened circumstances of whom it might be said that the idea of thankfulness is foreign to them.

But here is a man who was unwilling that he should be of that number. This is said to be a Psalm of David’s, and we know that David had much to be thankful for. David also knew that the people of Israel had much to praise God for, and he compared this psalm for their use. It is one of the most beautiful of the psalms. It has expressed the thoughts of grateful hearts for many, many centuries, and will for many more.

### Thanksgiving an Inward Matter

We might note, first of all, that thanksgiving is a spiritual quality. It is a matter of the mind and heart. David calls upon his soul, and “all that is within” to bless God’s holy name.

I was recently in New Orleans attending a meeting of Synod. We had frequent occasion to go to different parts of the large city. I asked, “How have these people been able to survive these trying times? There are so many of them.” You drive along the streets of such a city without being at all familiar with what is going on within those homes. In each of them there is a distinctive social atmosphere. It may be one of radiance and happiness, or of misery and sordidness, one of innocence or one of guilt.

The same is true of the individual. You cannot tell by merely mingling with the crowd just what lies behind closed doors of each personality. We so often misjudge because we judge entirely by the exterior. We might also be appalled at the disclosures of an inner survey of one whose exterior was attractive.

Religion is essentially an inward matter. We may forget that. We may think that God ought not to be displeased with us since we have done no overt act forbidden by the commandments. Because we do not cure, or steal, or kill, we feel that we ought to be in good standing with God. But we recall that the Pharisees of Christ’s day were careful observers of intricate laws, and yet were condemned by our Lord. He gave them to understand that religion is not essentially a matter of outward conduct.

So, the matter of thanksgiving is not of the lips only. Real thanksgiving comes from the depths of the soul. "Bless the Lord, O my soul". The psalmist called upon his soul to consider, keep in mind, retain in memory, the Lord's benefits.

There is one quality in man which may be regarded as a mark of gentility. By means of it we may divide the sheep from the goats. It is gratitude. There are stolid souls who feel that they have a right to all they can get. If a beneficent Providence brings them good, they take it as a matter of course. If kind friends minister to their needs, they are regarded as merely doing their duty. If these are withheld, such people are ready to renounce God and resort to violence and abuse.

One reason why we do not thank more is that we do not think more along the right lines. We may not be able to remember all our benefits, but we can at least not forget them all.

Instead of thinking on the benefits, we so often think on the things we do not have, on the disappointments, the flaws, the shortcomings. The minds of many people dwell on the slights, snubs, digs -- real or imaginary. They see only the weeds in the garden and not the flowers.

The elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son was very much upset by the attention shown the returned prodigal. He said to his father, "You have never done this or that for me". But the father said, "Son, all that I have is thine". That was lost sight of.

That fable of the dog with a bone crossing a stream and observing what he thought was another dog with a better bone in the water. The dog forgot what he had and tried to get what the other dog seemed to have. He was the loser by it. We should be grateful for what we have.

So, this psalm writer was not going to let his mind wander off into contemplation of things which other people seemed to have more than he. He was calling upon his soul to think on the benefits. These were for the most part spiritual blessings -- God's revelation of himself, of his wonderful character as Father and forgiver of iniquities, as the renewer of youth, and as the satisfier of man's essential wants.

#### Thanksgiving as Outwardness

It is according to a law of the universe that expression is essential to life. Feelings unexpressed soon die. We curb the expression of gratitude to our peril. As the flower needs the sun, so does the grace of gratitude need manifestation in service.

None is so poor that he has not the obligation to share what he has. The beggar should share his crust, the wounded soldier the last few drops in his canteen. To feel that we are too poor to do anything is fatal. It is not a question as to whether our little contribution will amount to anything in the way of bringing help to others. For our own sakes, we must do our part.

I feel sure that Jesus had this in mind when he noted the fact that only one of the ten lepers came back to express thanks. It was not what it meant to him, but what it meant to those lepers. He was thrilled by the act of the widow who gave all her living.

The other night, I was in a group several miles north of Minden, when an appeal for voluntary membership in Red Cross was made. Among those who came up was a Negro man, who, as he handed in his fee, said half to himself, "Dat's my last dollar".

One of the noticeable things is that homes from which solicitors for charity are most often turned away empty are the homes in rather comfortable circumstances.

Two questions are most frequently asked, when appeals for charity are given. One of these is this, "Why should I give to a fund from which some conscienceless, unappreciative wretch, better off than I, will filch every dollar he can?" Too often we let our minds dwell on that imposition, and forget the hundred other cases in which the helping hand has meant everything. We cannot afford to withhold, for our own sake, if for no other's. How easy it is to become hardened, to let ourselves degenerate into ungrateful beings. The psalmist was not going to let himself degenerate to such a low level.

Another frequently asked question is, "When will this ever end? When will the time come that no appeals will have to be made for the poor?" Never, I suppose. We will have the poor with us always. And here too, we may urge again, that it is a blessed thing that such is the case. It is our salvation.

### Thanksgiving as Orientation

A thankful heart has true perspective of its relationship to others. Absolute independence is impossible. A man may say that he is going on to attend to his own business and will let others take care of theirs. But we are all mutually dependent.

We are at the receiving end of ten thousand channels of helpfulness. The man who does not recognize his essential dependence is either ill informed or thoroughly selfish. Innumerable things have been done for us which we could not have done for ourselves. We are the beneficiaries of great accomplishments and wealth of beauty and inspiration. Only the grateful soul has properly related himself to all this.

We are unhappy because we are thinking of something that we do not have. We can be happy if we think on what we have. There is the rich heritage of cultural, material, spiritual achievement that has come down to us. Think of the achievements of history. Anesthetics, surgery, remedies. Devices making for comfort and convenience. Institutions that stand ready to lend a helping hand -- sanitariums, orphanages, relief agencies. Homes. Nature's inexhaustible stores. Beauty. Churches. The hopeful trend of things. The promise of the better day to come.

The person who is properly related to life is appreciative of any new thought, any new object of beauty, any new note of melody, any new secret of nature discovered. This all adds to the richness of life. Life is enjoyable only to the grateful.

Thankfulness becomes sympathy in the presence of need. The grateful usually are the most generous.

“Freely as ye have received, so give  
Said He who has given us all;  
How shall the soul in us longer live  
Deaf to the starving call?  
For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,  
And His body broken to give them bread,  
If we eat our morsel alone.”

## Like as a Father

Colonial Church, Dallas, TX  
Rockdale Presbyterian, Rockdale, TX

June 15, 1947  
June 20, 1954 (rewritten)

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.”

Psalm 103:13

This beautiful psalm from which the text is taken begins with a challenge to the writer’s own soul to “Bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits”. In language that is familiar from frequent quoting, the psalmist lists reasons why the Lord should be constantly in mind. Thoughtful people are thankful people. So many people are apparently thankless because they allow themselves to forget. I wonder if you have not reproached yourself many times because of a failure to express appreciation. Your failure was not due to any lack of appreciation. The matter was simply crowded out of the mind. The psalmist called upon his soul to see to it that this did not happen. He was not optimistic enough to expect his soul to remember all the benefits from God. He asks that all be not forgotten.

I suppose that there are people with a mind so warped that they cannot think of the benefits, but rather of the withholdings. You know people who seem to think of what they do not like in others. So in relationship to God some may let their minds dwell on ways in which other people have been blessed and they have not. They see the thorns on the rose bush, not the flowers. We ought to practice the art of thinking constantly of the good things.

The psalmist enumerates some of the things that we should keep constantly in mind. They are salient benefits. One of the things for which he is grateful is that the character of God has been revealed in its winsomeness and loveliness. God made known his ways unto Moses, and to the children of Israel, and then to David, himself. Out of that revelation, he was able to say that “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him”. That is a beautiful statement.

### God is Like a Father

“No, this is not a mistranslation,” writes Dr. Clovis G. Chappell, well known Methodist church preacher, in one of his meditations. “It really does say, not like as a mother, but like as a father. I insist on this,” he says, “because the reputation of the modern father has fallen on evil days. While mother’s name is a signal for handkerchiefs, his is too often a signal for howls”. He goes on to say that he believes there are fathers still in whose hearts God can find a love and pity akin to his own. “In so saying I am not seeking to dim the golden crown that mother wears; I am only asking for a little silver crown for Dad” (Christian Herald, June 1945, p. 35).

The most winsome picture we have in all literature of God is the story of the loving father of the prodigal son and his elder brother. There is no more beautiful story than that.

God is addressed as “Father” more often than in any other way.

Of course, there is no father among us who can adequately exemplify the love of God. But, for that matter, we encounter the same difficulty in any other attempt to form conceptions of the infinite. We can think only in terms of the finite. Fatherhood at its very best is but a mere suggestion of the loving character of God.

### The Point of Likeness

We might with profit spend a moment on that word “pitieth”. Do good fathers “pity” their children? Well, some children need to be pitied because they have the father they have, and that goes also for some mothers. I have some fathers that were sorry, but had enough of the sense of decency left to pity their own children for having such fathers. But that is not what the psalmist is referring to here. The Hebrew word means to “be soft to”, “soothe”, “be fond of”, “cherish”, “love”. Pity is a term often used in a depreciatory sense, describing the feeling that a victor might have towards a victim in a state of weakness and inferiority.

What the psalmist is really saying is that just as a father loves his children, so God loves his. He manifests that love in many ways. He has in mind the frailty of our powers and our dependence upon him. “Like as a father hath compassion on his children, so Jehovah has compassion on them that revere him” (Perowne).

It is not in the realm of the intellect that fathers suggest the Almighty. It is in the realm of the emotions. Some fathers would like to be known as the essence of wisdom. They cannot play the role long.

There was a small boy who called his father at the office. The little fellow said, “Hello, who is this?” The father immediately recognized the voice of his son, and playfully said, “This is the smartest man in the world”. “Pardon me,” said the small voice, “I’ve got the wrong number”.

There is no discounting the great love of a true father’s heart.

### Ways of Manifestation

1. A father’s love is shown by the provision he makes for his children. Not all fathers are good material providers. They may provide something else that is far better. Fathers who pay the bills, and feel no further responsibility, are not good fathers. I have heard men say, “I provide the living, and the wife looks after the rearing of the children”. That sounds simple, but the matter is not as simple as that. The father who is too busy with his club, business, games, and outings to do his part in providing the unseen factors in child life is entirely too busy and derelict in his essential duty.

I like the poem called the “Bridge Builder”. You have all heard it and perhaps used it:

“An old man traveling a lone highway  
Came, at the evening cold and gray,  
To a chasm, deep and wide.  
The old man crossed in a twilight dim,  
For the sullen stream held no fear for him.  
For he turned when he reached the other side,  
And builded a bridge to span the tide.

“‘Old man’ cried a fellow pilgrim near,  
‘You are wasting your strength with your building here;  
Your journey will end with the ending day,  
And you never again will pass this way.  
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide:  
Why build a bridge at eventide?’

“And the builder raised his old gray head.  
‘Good friend, on the path I have come’, he said,  
‘There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet will pass this way.  
This stream which has been naught to me,  
To that fair-headed boy may a pitfall be.  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him’.”

2. It is shown in insistence on high standards of action.

No father can afford to set a bad example, or be indifferent as to the conduct of his children. Any number of fathers refrain from courses that might be otherwise permissible, lest their actions be misinterpreted and be made an excuse for wrongdoing on the part of their children.

One of the most moving stories of the Old Testament record is that about David’s lament over the death of his son, Absalom, who had led a rebellion against him. For reasons which we do not need to try to surmise here, Prince Absalom seized the throne, and his father fled across Jordan, and rallied his forces at a place called Mahanaim. Soon the forces of Absalom and the forces of David joined battle in the forest of Ephraim which was probably also east of the Jordan, and not very far from Mahanaim. The forces of Absalom were routed. In his flight, Absalom was caught in the branches of a tree, and was slain by dart thrusts at the hands of Joab.

David sat between the two gates of the city, waiting for report of the battle. The news came. Absalom had been slain. David then poured out his fatherly heart in words that have rung down through the centuries: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son”.

It is apparent that those who surrendered David were not able to understand his feeling towards his rebellious son. As you read the history of previous years, you find that there were many things which contributed to this turn of events. A heathen mother, a very busy father, the flattery of the court, the dissatisfied element in the government. Then, too, just as Absalom was coming to young manhood the David-Bathsheba scandal shook the court, and defiled his imagination, and doubtless lessened Absalom's respect for his father.

As a matter of fact, David's sin took a terrific toll in his life and spirit. It brought on complications in the household that he could not deal with because conscience pointed an accusing finger at him constantly.

I grew up in a home form which all alcoholic beverages were excluded. There was plenty of warning against its dangers. But as I look back now over the years, the incident that made the deepest impression on my young mind was connected with a highly respected family in Walton County, Georgia. I went with my widowed grandmother to the May meeting at old Gum Creek (Primitive Baptist) Church, and we enjoyed the hospitality of the Camp family (along with a great host of others, as the custom was). As I darted around the house with the other boys, I noticed that after dinner a group of men gathered around the cupboard from which the host had taken a decanter and all seemed intent on the business in hand. I asked my grandmother what they were doing. She told me that this was an old social custom, which she along with practically every other woman of the dime, did not approve of. "There's not a better man in Walton County than Mr. Camp. But he's setting those boys of his a mighty bad example". As it turned out, those three boys, under the influence of liquor, to the use of which they became addicted, committed crimes and offenses that kept the courts of Walton County busy for a generation.

In my ministry since then, I have seen numerous repetitions of this with variations. "The way of the transgressor is hard". It matters not the type of transgression: profanity, gambling, dishonesty, impurity, godlessness.

Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer was for nearly a half century pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans. There was not a man in that city who had a greater influence than did he. When a group of people became convinced that the Louisiana Lottery should be wiped out, they held a great city wide meeting, and the speaker of that occasion was Dr. Palmer. After that speech, those who heard it said they were sure that the lottery was doomed. It proved to be so.

When Dr. Palmer was at the peak of his power and fame, he wrote his aged father a letter on his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. It has been preserved. Few people have heard of the father, but many thousands know of the son. The son wrote:

It has been a long life, undimmed by a single reproach -- as it seems to us, not obscured by a single mistake -- a life never embittered by human enmities -- as judged by any earthly standard, a life of rare gentleness and humility, of singular consecration to duty, of transparent sincerity and religious devotion, a whole burnt offering of service and of

sacrifice to God, and to man...Feeling its influence in the shaping of your children's own character and destiny, they rejoice in the beauty of your life's sunset, even more than in the glory of its noonday brightness" (Southern Literature, IX:3932).

3. It is shown in patient forbearance.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, prominent evangelist of this country, use to tell of a man in Iowa who had been storming at his family, especially his poor wife, one day until everybody was miserable. He went out, slamming the door behind him. His little boy stood off at one side listening to it all. Then he came across the room to his mother and said, "Mother, we made an awful mistake when we married father, didn't we?"

The story of the Prodigal Son is a beautiful picture of God's love and forgiveness.

There have been fathers who would not forgive their sons. I knew of a father who jumped on his son, a young man fully grown, in a police court after the latter had been convicted of a misdemeanor. The father may have thought that he was exonerating himself of the blame for his son's misdeed.

Dr. David Smith, English minister, relates that during his ministry he had to do with an old man who was afflicted with a no good soon. A man asked the father one day about the boy. "He is doing worse than ever", the father sadly said. "How do you put up with him? If he were mine, I'd turn him out." "So would I, if he were yours: he's mine."

You know, David wrote this psalm from which my text is taken. I do not know whether it was before or after the Absalom incident. I am sure it was out of deep experience that he wrote, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth him that fear him", and he could have added, even those who are prodigals.

Here is a father's prayer:

"Make me patient, Lord,  
Slow to reprove,  
Help me to understand,  
Teach me to love.  
This is my fervent plea:  
May I forever be  
Guiding young life to thee,  
Father above."

-- Kenneth C. Hendricks

It is a rather significant statement in the Old Testament -- the very last statement of Malachi -- that one called Elijah, not the Tishbite, should come "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the hart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4:16).

If a right relationship between father and children is capable of saving the earth from a curse, it is worthy of our most serious consideration today.

## The Song that Never Dies

Minden, LA  
Rockdale, TX

December 18, 1928  
December 25, 1955 (rewritten)

“I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have being.”

Psalm 104:33

This text is taken from the Hebrew hymnal. It is called the Book of Psalms. There are 150 of them. Not all of the hymns of the Bible are placed in the Book of Psalms. They are scattered throughout the Bible. In fact, singing is a natural response of the human heart to the revelation and experience of divine greatness.

These hymns of the Bible have been regarded as an inspired hymnody. Being such, they will always live and be the inspiration of the exultant and devoted spirits forever. For a long time, our churches felt that only “inspired” hymns should be used in the worship services. Now, few of the psalms are included in our hymnals, and in their stead are numerous hymns that have been written by gifted men and women during the Christian era.

There is no way of knowing how many songs have been written. We do know that the number is legion. The most of them have not lived, for one reason or another. It might be difficult to discover the reason in many instances. It might be easy to understand why such a beautiful composition as “The Messiah”, a portion of which our choir rendered last Sunday, and portions of which are being sung this Christmas all over the world, should live. Why have not others of the compositions of Handel had the same popularity. He is said to have spent only 24 days on the Messiah, and much longer effort on other compositions. Charles Wesley, whom James Moffatt declared to be the greatest hymn writer of any age, produced more than 6,500 hymns. We have some 15 of them in our green hymnal. Isaac Watts was also a very prolific writer of hymns. When he died, 600 of his hymns were in common use. We have 12 of them in our green hymnal.

Themes abide, even though the phrases come and go. Love and faith and hope and thanksgiving and peace have inspired many songs, and will continue to inspire them. But the theme that will inspire songs even into eternity is redeeming grace.

On this Christmas morning, when the birth of the Christ child is being celebrated, it is a good time to take note of the extent to which this theme is present in the songs of the Bible, from the beginning to the end.

The Song of Moses

Israel was once enslaved to Egypt. But the Lord heard their cry of oppression and sent them a deliverer in the person of Moses. They were led out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, which divided for the people, but which closed on the pursuers and engulfed them. When it became apparent that the deliverance had been accomplished, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song unto the Lord, saying, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation”. It is recorded in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus.

Many years later, after the wanderings of the Israelites were over, and when Moses was about to relinquish his leadership to Joshua, just before the people entered the Promised Land, he taught the people a song, which was to be a witness against them in the day when they decided to go after other gods. The song he taught the people memorialized the saving grace of the God of their fathers. It is recorded in Deuteronomy 32 (43 verses long!).

We shall hear the Song of Moses later in Biblical history.

### The Song of David

The Psalms have been the song book of the Church for many centuries. They live because they are related to undying themes. No theme is more conspicuous in the Psalms than redemptive grace.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (103:2-5). “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32).

### The Song of the Prophet

Whether it was Isaiah, looking forward through the eyes of a seer, or some later writer who looked upon the reality -- at least some inspired voice contemplated the return of captive Israel from Babylon, as he exhorts -- “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it...Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob” (Isaiah 44:23).

### The Songs of the Nativity

Within the period of a year, embracing the time of the birth of Jesus, four immortal hymns were given the world. They have been sung in the church for lo these many years. These songs are known best by the first words of their Latin versions. They are the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria in Excelsis, and the Nunc Dimittis. They have been associated with Christian worship from the earliest times, as chants.

1. The Magnificat (The Song of Mary) (Luke 1:46:55) It was uttered in the Spring of B. C. 5, before the birth of Jesus in the following December. After Mary had been

informed by the angel that she was to be the mother of Jesus, she went from Nazareth to Juda in Judea, where, upon being greeted by Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist) Mary broke forth into this remarkable utterance of faith and devotion: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (138 words in AV).

2. The Benedictus (The Song of Zacharias) (Luke 1:68-79). The aged priest Zacharias, was father of John the Baptist. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day after the birth of John, he spoke for the first time in months, and then in song: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people” (203 words in AV). Uttered in June, B. C. 5, about 3 months after the Magnificat was sung.

3. The Gloria in Excelsis (The Song of the Angels) (Luke 2:14). This utterance was made by the angels to the shepherds on the hills around Bethlehem on the night of the birth of our Lord. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men” (14 words in AV). This was uttered in December B. C. 5, 6months after the Benedictus.

4. The Nunc Dimittis (The Song of Simeon) (Luke 2:29-32). Simeon was a devout man who came to the temple at the time of the presentation of Jesus -- six weeks after birth. He took the Baby into his arms and said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”. This is said to be the “sweetest and most solemn song of the Nativity” (43 words in AV). Uttered in February, B. C. 4.

You have heard that old legend about the way in which Richard the Lionhearted, king of England, while a prisoner in Austria was located by his favorite minstrel. Richard was returning from the Third Crusade in the Holy Land, when he was shipwrecked near Ragusa and was forced to cross Germany on foot. He disguised himself, and all went well until he entered Austria, where he was recognized and made a prisoner. Just where he was imprisoned, no one in England seemed to know. Richard’s favorite minstrel traveled all over the country. Everywhere he sang the king’s favorite song, knowing that if the king heard it he would respond. He finally came to the castle where the king was, and sang there. The king heard the song and took up the melody. The minstrel then knew that his master was there. He carried a message in song.

The greatest message that ever came to the earth came in song -- the song at the first Christmas. Men heard it and responded in faith, believing that deliverance from above had come to this sin-sick world. It was the song of redeeming love.

### The Song of Paul

We have not been accustomed to think of Paul as a singer. Evidently, he was. Redeeming grace was the theme of his preaching. It would naturally be the theme of his singing. There is no more beautiful psalm in all the Scripture than Paul’s psalm on love (1 Corinthians 13).

What song do you suppose Paul and Silas sang the night they lay in jail in Philippi, with their backs bleeding from the lashes of the Philippians? We can guess the theme, at least. It must have been a song of redeeming grace. For you remember that the jailer, when he found the prisoners had not taken flight when the jail was opened by the earthquake, rushed in asking, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

### The Song of the Redeemed

In Revelation, we are given a glimpse of Heaven in which are gathered those who have “gotten the victory over the beast and who stand on the sea of glass, having he harps of God”, and sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb (Revelation 15:2,3).

The song of Moses was a song of redeeming grace, and so is the song of the Lamb, celebrating the triumph of God over the forces that enslave and dominate mankind. The bestial tendencies, the Godless selfishness, the fleshly inclination have been overcome by the Lamb. That is something to sing about.

So, evidently redeeming grace is something to sing about. The Bible rings with it, and the Church has made that the very heart of its hymnody. Had you ever thought about the themes of the most beloved hymns we have? Let me name some of them: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound”; “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”; “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood”; “The Old Rugged Cross”; “O for a Thousand Tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise”.

The Christmas songs are fundamentally the songs of redemption. It is the coming into this world of the Savior that we sing about. There are no more beautiful songs than these.

The response of our hearts in this season should be that expressed in the lines of a most familiar hymn:

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.  
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I’ll sing Thy power to save,  
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue  
Lies silent in the grave.”