

What Do You Do With Your Burdens?

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What Do You Do With Your Burdens?

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

For every man shall bear his own burden. (Galatians 6:5)

Most little towns of a bygone day had a character known as the town atheist, a freethinker, generally a ne'er-do-well. The little town in which I lived as a boy lacked many things. It didn't have streetlights. In fact, we didn't have electric lights in our home, and I can remember using a kerosene lamp to study by in those days. Our little town didn't have sidewalks, it didn't have paved streets. It didn't have running water – except what you ran out to the well to get; and it didn't have inside plumbing. There were many things our little town lacked, but we did have a town atheist. He called himself a socialist. Each Sunday morning, weather permitting, he was down at the street corner on the town square, speaking. These fellows are generally loquacious, and this fellow was especially so. Usually he had about a dozen listeners who were also loafers. On my way to Sunday school – I killed as much time as possible – I always stopped to listen to him. The thing that impressed me about this atheist was that his mouth was cut on a bias, and as he chewed tobacco an amazing thing took place. He not only defied the Word of God, he also defied the law of gravitation. You would think, according to the law of gravitation, that the tobacco juice would run out of the lower corner of his mouth. But it didn't. It ran out of the upper corner. I used to stand there as a boy and wonder how he did it.

This man, I remember, always ridiculed the Bible and pointed out supposed contradictions. His favorites were verses 2 and 5 in the sixth chapter of Galatians:

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.... For every man shall bear his own burden.

He would read both verses, then lift his head, leer at the crowd and say, "You see, there is a contradiction in the Bible. One place it says that you are to bear one another's burdens, and then it says you are to bear your own burdens." None of us in the little town knew how to answer him, so we just stood there in silence and listened to him. Actually, the answer was very simple, but we didn't know it in those days.

There are in the Scriptures eleven different words that are translated by our one English word *burden*. This means there are different kinds of burdens. There are some burdens that you can share; there are other burdens that you must bear and cannot share with anyone. That is a very simple but a very satisfactory answer.

Burdens are those things that we all have in common. All of us have burdens. Not all of us have wealth, but we have burdens. Not all of us have health, but we have burdens. Not all of us have talents, but we have burdens. Some of us even lack physical members – not all of us can see, not all of us can hear, not all of us have arms and legs, and certainly not all of us have good looks. We say that we all have the same blood, but it is not the same; it comes in different types. Although we may not have very much in common, we all have burdens.

However, not all of us have the same burdens. Actually, we all have different burdens. What Paul is doing in this sixth chapter of Galatians is dividing burdens into two classes: burdens which we can share and burdens which we must bear and cannot share.

Burdens You Can Share

He first refers to burdens that you can share:

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Dr. Lenski, the Lutheran expositor, has a very fine translation of this verse: "The burdens of each other keep bearing." That is a literal translation. The Greek word for "burden" in this verse is *baros*, and it simply means "something heavy." There are other derivatives, but fundamentally and basically it simply means "something heavy." Our Lord used it when He spoke about "the *burden* and the heat of the day." And the early church, when it met in its first council in Jerusalem, made this decision: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater *burden* than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28), speaking of a burden that the Gentile churches were to share with the church in Jerusalem.

Someone has said that a load is only half a load when two are carrying it. There are burdens today that we can share.

A woman boarded a bus with a very heavy basket. She sat down beside a man and put the basket on her lap. After noticing her discomfort he said, "Lady, if you would put that heavy basket down on the floor, you would find that the bus would carry both you and your load." May I say to you, there are burdens that you can let someone else bear with you.

Again, the word *baros* can mean "fault," as we shall see. It can mean "infirmity." It can mean "tension." And it can mean "grief." These are some of its meanings.

Now what are some of the burdens that you and I can share? We will look at three of them, although there are many others.

Faults

The first of these three is one that all of us have today. It is the burden of our faults. I think everybody has at least one fault.

A man speaking to a group asked the question, "Is there anyone here who does not have a fault, or do you know of someone who does not have a fault?" No one raised his hand. After he had repeated the question several times, a little fellow in the back, a Mr. Milquetoast type, raised his hand. The speaker asked him to stand.

"Are you the one who has no faults?"

"Oh, no," he said, "I'm not the one."

"Then do you know someone who does not have any faults?"

"Well," he said, "I don't exactly know him, but I have heard of him."

"Tell me, who is he?"

The little fellow said, "He's my wife's first husband."

And I have a notion that he had heard of him quite a few times!

All of us have faults. Notice that Paul began this sixth chapter of Galatians like this:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
(Galatians 6:1)

Faults – that’s a burden. And the word *fault* here means “to fall down.” It is the Greek word *paraptoma*, meaning “a falling aside.” Many times we fall down. Many times we see a brother fall down, and we are told, “Ye who are spiritual *restore* such an one.” *Restore* is the same word used in the Greek for a physician to reset a bone. This is the meaning that is really primary here. It requires a man who is an expert, a man who has deftness and experience to reset a bone. Notice that he says, “Ye who are *spiritual* restore such an one.” Oh, the clumsiness of so many people in trying to straighten out somebody else! We need to be *spiritual* to restore such an one. Also note that we are to *restore* him, not drive him out of our fellowship. The sin should be condemned – there is no toleration in the Scriptures for sin – but the sinner should be restored. Sometimes it seems as if we have gone out of the business of restoring. Instead, we are in the business of criticizing the man with the fault, the man who has fallen down.

Also notice that we are to restore “in the spirit of meekness.” One of the great preachers of the South reminded me of this a few years ago when we were together. He and I had graduated from college together. We also had graduated from seminary together, and we both had worked our way through college. I worked in downtown Memphis on a newspaper, and he was the manager of a garage at night. One night I got on the streetcar to go back to the dormitory, and I saw him standing in the back of the streetcar. It was a warm night, the windows were open, and he had his head hanging out. I walked back and found that he was sick, but not only that, he was drunk. He turned to me and said, “Mac, I’m getting out of the ministry. I’m discouraged.” He had been engaged to a girl in Alabama who had let him down, and he felt the whole world was against him. He said, “I’m through. I’m leaving school.” I hit him on the back as hard as I dared, and said, “No, you’re not.” I got him off the streetcar a block before we reached the school, and I slipped him around the corner and brought him in the back door of the dorm. He didn’t have a roommate at that time; so I just put him to bed with his shoes and clothes on. The next day he came to me and said, “Mac, I thank you for what you’ve done, but I still am going to leave.” Well, I talked with him and could tell him, “I have felt just like you feel, and I could have done exactly what you did, easily.” Well, he did not leave school, and I thank God for that because he is today one of the beloved preachers of the South. The Scriptures tell us:

Brethren, if a man [a Christian man] be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

There is not a sin committed today by anyone but what you or I could have committed it. The faults of others are burdens that you and I can share.

Tensions

Then there is another burden that you and I can share: tensions. Now you can take a tranquilizer but, my friend, that really won’t solve your problems. We are living in a time of tension such as the human family has never before experienced. I don’t know about you, but I live in “Tension Town.” Many of us in these great metropolitan areas are under pressure and tension today. This is certainly a burden we need to bear with one another. Let me illustrate. A very dear man in one of the churches I pastored came to me and said, “Do you have something against me?”

“No,” I said. “Why do you say that?”

“Well, I met you down on the street and you didn’t even speak to me.”

“I didn’t?”

“No, you just passed me right by.”

“I didn’t see you.”

“You must have – you looked right at me.”

So I asked him what day that was and realized it was the day the airlines had gotten my tickets mixed up, and I was going down to the ticket office to straighten them out. We are under tension at a time like that. And my friend was also under tension for assuming I had snubbed him. Well, I never shall forget how he put his arm around me and said, “I’m glad to know that.” You see, he was helping me bear the burden of tension. That’s something we can share with each other.

Grief

Now I come to the third burden you and I can share. That is the burden known as grief. The burden of tragedy, the burden of sorrow, the burden of disappointment are inevitable in the human family. If one hasn’t come to you, it will come. And when it comes, you need a friend to stand with you. The three friends of Job are examples. We criticize them because they began a talking marathon, but actually they spent seven days sitting with Job and sorrowing with him.

In a book of natural history there is a statement that reads: “Man is the only one who at birth knows nothing and can learn nothing without being taught. He can neither speak nor walk nor eat. In short, he can do nothing at the prompting of nature but weep.” All that you and I know to do when we come into this world is weep! We come into this world with a cry, and we need comfort. From the very beginning and all through life we need comfort because of the fact that we have been born into this world of woe.

Ruth could say to Boaz, “Thou hast comforted me.” She was a stranger, an outcast, had come from a foreign country, and expected to be kept on the outside, but into her life came someone who showed an interest in her and extended to her certain courtesies. With appreciation she said, “Thou hast comforted me.”

Mary broke open an alabaster box of very expensive perfume, and poured it upon the head of our Lord. She did this shortly before His crucifixion because she knew what was going to take place. No one else seemed to realize what was happening, but she knew. She was criticized for it, but Jesus said, “Let her alone; for the day of my burial hath she kept this” (John 12:7). She alone entered into His sufferings. And He said,

Verily I say unto you, Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her. (Matthew 26:13)

And the fragrance of that ointment has filled the world!

Grief is a burden that you can share. There will be those who will come to you in your sorrow.

Our faults, our tensions, our griefs – these are some of the burdens that you and I can share.

*Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with a friend,*

*And thro' all the years of famine
It shall serve thee to the end.
Love Divine will fill thy storehouse,
Or thy handful still renew.
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two.
Lost and weary on the mountains,
Wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow?
Chafe that frozen form beside thee,
And together both shall glow.
Art thou wounded in life's battle?
Many stricken round thee moan;
Give to them thy precious ointment,
And that balm shall heal thine own.*

– Author unknown

Burdens You Must Bear

Now let's look at the other verse that tells us there are burdens which we cannot share.

For every man shall bear his own burden. (Galatians 6:5)

The word “burden” here is the Greek *phortion*, meaning a load to be borne. This word is used to speak of a ship's cargo. Actually it is used to speak of a child in the womb – only the mother could bear it, you see. This is a load that is impossible to share. While I never recommend J. B. Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English* as a translation (it should not be called a translation), it is a most excellent explanation. Many times it throws light on a passage of Scripture. Here it gives this paraphrase of Galatians 6:5: “For every man must ‘shoulder his own pack.’ ” That's it. Each man must shoulder his own pack. There is an old bromide: “To every man his work.” And another, a rather crude one, “Every tub must sit on its own bottom!” In other words, there are burdens today that you and I cannot share.

Every life in one sense is separated, it is isolated, it is segregated, it is quarantined from every other life. Dr. Funk, of the Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary, has compiled a list of words in which the saddest word in the English language is *alone*. There are certain burdens that you and I will have to bear alone. I will mention just a few of them here, and you will think of others, I'm sure.

Suffering

The first one I want to mention is suffering. You will have to suffer alone. No one can suffer for you. You are born alone into this world of woe, and you will suffer alone. You will have to face certain problems alone. There will be physical suffering that will come to you. You will get sick, and no one can take your place.

When my daughter was a very little thing, we were coming back to California from Texas, and she started running a high fever. We took her to the hospital at Globe, Arizona. A doctor gave her certain medication and told us, “You give her this, and the fever will go down. It is getting late in the afternoon so keep driving into California and get out of the heat!” So we

started out. In Phoenix we stopped for gasoline, and my wife took her temperature. It registered 104 degrees – her temperature hadn't gone down. We were frightened. We went to a motel, called a doctor, and told him the situation. He said to continue the medication and to bring her to the hospital in the morning. Never shall I forget my feelings as I carried her to the hospital and laid her down. Never in my life had I had that experience. I would have gladly taken that fever in my own body, *gladly* would I have done it. But, my friend, I could not do it. We have to suffer alone. You cannot get someone to substitute for you. Suffering is one thing that we cannot share. Mental anguish is another type of suffering that you cannot share. Oh, the number of folk who are disappointed. They are even bitter today because of some great disappointment. Suffering is a burden that we have to bear alone.

Death

There is another burden that you and I cannot share with anyone else. It is death. There will come a time when each of us will go down through the valley of the shadow of death, and we will go alone. Thomas Hobbes, an agnostic all of his life, a very brilliant man, said when he came to his death, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark!" And then he cried out, "Oh, God, it is lonely!" Yes, it is. Death is a burden you cannot share. John Haye, at one time Secretary of State, was quite a writer. He wrote a poem portraying death entitled "The Stirrup Cup," having in mind the cavalrymen who used to drink when they mounted their steeds.

*My short and happy day is done
The long and lonely night comes on:
And at my door the pale horse stands
To bear me forth to unknown lands.*

And, my friend, when death comes, you and I will be riding alone. Death is a burden that you will have to bear alone.

The Bema

We come now to the last burden we will bear alone. It has an unusual name, by the way. It is the *Bema*. The *Bema* is the judgment seat of Christ. It is not for the unsaved; it is for Christians. Oh yes, there is a judgment for the unbeliever, the Great White Throne judgment described in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, but the *Bema* seat is for the Christian.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Everything that we have done in the flesh as Christians is to be judged to see whether or not we receive a reward. Salvation is not in question – that was settled for the believer at the cross of Christ. It is the works of the believer that are to be judged at the *Bema* seat.

So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

Then Paul puts down a principle which is applicable to every avenue of life, but is specifically given to believers:

Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Galatians 6:7)

This principle is true in the realm of nature. You sow cotton, you reap cotton. You sow wheat, you reap wheat. And as a Christian you will reap what you sow. We like to sing “The Old Account Was Settled Long Ago.” In a believer’s life this is true. But what about the new account? What about the account since you were saved? What has your life been since you accepted Christ? Do you have sin in your life? Have you confessed it? We are all to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Somebody will say, “I’m a Christian. I don’t have any sin.” You don’t? Then you are not in the light. If you will get into the light, you will see the sin that is in your life. The light, which is the Word of God, reveals what is there.

Try this one on for size: “Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Does that fit you today? I think it will fit all of us. He that knows to do good, and does it not, *sins*. Your life as a child of God is a burden that you carry, and you will have to bring it before Him someday.

A Burden You Can Neither Bear Nor Share

Now as I bring this message to a conclusion, I want you to see that there is another type of burden which you cannot bear nor can you share. It is a burden the Scriptures speak of: the burden of sin. Paul speaks of it in the first part of Romans. David in the Psalms says:

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; like an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. (Psalm 38:4)

Sin is a burden you cannot share with anyone else. And sin is a burden you cannot bear, my friend. “My iniquities,” David says, “are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” Also from the Psalms comes this longing:

And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. (Psalm 55:6)

Have you ever felt like that? Sometimes the doctor recommends that we get away from it all. The psalmist said, “If I could only run away from it.” But you and I cannot run away from our sin because we have a guilt complex. A psychologist out here at the University of Southern California tells me that the guilt complex is as much a part of us as our right arm. Psychologists have tried to get rid of it. They have not succeeded. Everyone has it. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the writer of detective stories and creator of Sherlock Holmes, liked to play practical jokes. At one time he sent a telegram to twelve famous people in London whom he knew. The telegram read, “Flee at once. All is discovered.” All twelve of them left the country – yet all of them were upright citizens. May I say to you, my beloved, we all have a guilt complex. Sin is that burden which we can neither share nor bear. It is too heavy for us.

There is only one place you can get rid of it, and that is at the cross of Christ:

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (Psalm 55:22)

The Lord Jesus said:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28)

He alone can lift the burden of sin today, and it is because He paid the penalty for it. He alone can lift it; He alone can take it from you.

There are two famous pieces of sculpture that depict this. One is the “Dying Gaul” and the other is “The Laocoön;” both are in Rome at the Vatican. “The Dying Gaul” depicts a man who has been brought as a captive and slave to Rome, put into the arena as a gladiator, and has been mortally wounded. He is lying there, his life blood flowing from him, and he is looking up for help. He is in a strange land, and there is nobody, nobody there to help him. A dying gladiator. May I say to you that this is a picture of any man today without Christ. Christ alone can help us, for that is the reason He came into the world. He said:

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

He also said:

... The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

Christ paid the penalty for your sin and my sin. Like the dying gladiator, we can look to Him and be saved.

The other piece of sculpture is “The Laocoön.” A priest of Troy looked out and saw two sea serpents come and coil themselves about his two sons. He went to their aid, but he could not help them because the sea serpents also enmeshed him in their coils. There they are – all three of them going down to death. To me this illustrates the fact that personal sin is a burden that we cannot cope with. It will take us down to death, eternal death.

What do *you* do with your burdens?

There are some burdens that you can share. There are others that you must bear alone. But the burden of personal sin is a burden too heavy for you; it is the burden you cannot bear. About 2000 years ago Christ took the burden of your sin, and He bore it on the cross. Today your burden is either on you, or by faith you have received Christ as your Savior, and it is now on Him. It cannot be in both places – your sin is either on you or it is on Christ. And Christ does not *share* it; He bore it all. Literally He said,

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
(Matthew 11:28)

What Do You Do With Your Fears?

...Who is made without fear. (Job 41:33)

“Who is made without fear” is a relative clause in the Book of Job (41:33), but we can turn it very nicely into an interrogative clause and ask the question, “Who is made without fear?” Fears are feelings that we all share to varying and differing degrees, and there are different kinds of fears. We sometimes smile at the old bromide that women are afraid of mice. But the bravest man would be mortally afraid if he knew he were going to give birth to a baby! Actually, there have been hundreds of babies born just in the first few hours of this very day, and the mothers certainly have had no band or fanfare to make the announcement that they have given birth.

Psychology lists fear, along with love and anger, as one of the strong and complex emotions of the human species. The TV, the theater, and the novels take these three emotions and mix them up like a Betty Crocker recipe. However, they don't always come out with the success that Betty Crocker seems to have with hers.

It is doubtful whether any member of the human family anywhere is devoid of fear. If he is, he's an abnormal individual. Fear is as much a part of our human makeup as eyes and nose and mouth.

The psalmist said that he belonged to the fraternity of fear, and he wrote, “I am a companion of all those who fear thee ...” (Psalm 119:63). By the way, he said that the fraternity of fear was a secret fraternity – he said: “The secret of the LORD is with those who fear him ...” (Psalm 25:14). David belonged to a secret fraternity of those who fear the Lord.

Fear was the first outward evidence and manifestation of the effect of the disobedience of Adam in the Garden of Eden. It was the first symptom of sin. For the very first thing that Adam did – and he confessed it – was to show fear. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked ...” (Genesis 3:10).

The first thing that this man confessed was that he was afraid. From that day, fear entered into the very web and woof of mankind. Man went out of the Garden of Eden and was told that by the sweat of his brow he would earn his bread. Driven by hunger and thirst and fear, the human family spread over this earth.

The bravest of men have feared. Moses is a man that no one could call a coward. Moses stood before Pharaoh, and the Pharaoh before whom he stood was no petty ruler. The man was a world ruler, and it took a brave man to deliver God's message to him. Also Moses stood before God yonder on Mount Sinai. It took a brave man to do that. In addition, for forty years he stood before the rebellious Israelites. It took a brave man to do that. And yet this man Moses, in the second chapter of Exodus, wrote of himself, “And Moses feared,” which is the reason he left the land of Egypt at that time.

David is a man who is noted for his bravery. But if you read the Psalms, you will find that one of the emotions he mentions is fear. David, probably more often than anyone else, describes the gamut of emotions that sweep across the human soul. He plays upon the soul, as God does, as if it were a three-stringed instrument – actually one with 126 strings, for he describes the many emotions that sweep through the human heart. He was very frank when he mentioned fear. He said: “When I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (Psalm 56:3). He admitted that he was a man of fear, yet here is a man who is known for his bravery.

Elijah was a brave man. Elijah stood before the prophets of Baal, and he stood before King Ahab. I don't know what happened to him, but I do know this: there was a great breakdown in

his life when word came from Jezebel that she would have him killed. Elijah turned and *ran*! He took off for Beersheba, wouldn't stop there, but went as far into the desert as he could and crawled underneath a juniper tree. He does not *say* he is afraid, but his actions speak louder than any words he could give us.

May I say to you that you will find that the bravest of men have been those who have been afraid. May I also say that all of us experience something that fills our hearts with fear.

Fear, down through the history of the race, has been looked upon as a weakness of mankind. It has been looked upon as a detriment. Men have always been applauded for their bravery; they have been ridiculed for their fears. "Only cowards fear" is an accepted cliché even today, and we are ashamed of our fears.

It was Shakespeare who wrote, "Of all base passions, fear is the most accursed." Even Emerson, the Unitarian whom many delight in quoting, gives this false statement: "Fear always springs from ignorance!" The most popular books following World War II were books that dealt with the subject of fear, with the general theme of freedom from fear.

My friend, the Bible has never gone along with the worldly philosophy and popular fallacy of the day. The Bible does not take the position that fear is cowardly. I have examined the many words in both the Old and New Testaments that are translated by the word "fear" and have found that they are divided into three classifications. There is the fear that is base and cowardly, craven, contemptible, and certainly to be shunned. There is another fear that is good and right and helpful, something that is a blessing to mankind. Finally, there is a third class of words that can be translated either good or evil. You have to look at the context to see whether it means good or bad.

The very interesting thing is that modern psychology has confirmed Scripture in this particular division. The fear instinct, they tell us, passes through three stages. There is a stimulating stage which is good. For example, you experience fear if you wake up at night and the house is on fire. Your pituitary gland immediately sends out an alarm to the adrenal gland, and the adrenal gland sends out into the bloodstream some extra energy so that you are able to jump and run and yell like you never did before. And after you get outside the house, you wonder how in the world you ever did it. My friend, that kind of fear is good. And the Scripture speaks of that kind of fear that leads to action, the fear that motivates you.

Then there is the second stage. It is called the arrestive or the inhibitory stage. It can be good, provided a person does not stay in that stage. He might be there for a moment, but if he stays there it is dangerous, for then he moves to the third stage which is the paralyzing stage.

Paralyzing fear is bad because it leads to all sorts of different complexes. You find people today who are afraid of germs. I knew a lady years ago who would not open a door without taking out a handkerchief to put over the doorknob; or, if she did open the door with her hand, she would go and wash her hands – not with common soap, but with soap that would destroy germs! She was off on that particular thing.

Then there are people today who are afraid of open spaces. They will not go across even a vacant lot. There are other people who are afraid of crowds. And then I do believe there is another form. I've never seen it listed – it must be common only to Southern California – and that is the fear of rain. I say this facetiously, of course.

As we've gone through the Word of God and attempted to make a careful study of the subject of fear, I believe that *fear* can be divided into two major classifications. The first fear is fear of God, and that is good. That leads to action. Also there is the fear of man, and that kind of fear, my beloved, leads to inaction. It is the kind that leads to paralysis.

It was said of Cromwell that he was the bravest man who ever lived. Someone asked Cromwell one day what was the secret of his bravery and why he was considered such a brave man. His answer was something like this: "I've learned from the Word of God that if you fear God you will not have any man to fear." May I say to you, this is the secret David learned. He wrote:

In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
(Psalm 56:11)

This is so important that when you move over to the New Testament, you find this statement:

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. (Hebrews 13:6)

My beloved, today you either have a fear of God or you have a fear of man. Either you are afraid of those things that are about you and what men say and what men do, or you are afraid of God.

Somebody will object, "I don't think we ought to be afraid of God." I believe that this is something today that needs emphasizing as it never has been emphasized before, especially in our fundamental circles where we have assumed a familiarity with God which the Scriptures will not warrant at all. Somehow or other God is regarded as only a great big brother whom we pat on the back in most familiar terms. I say to you today, friend, we do well to fear God. And if we fear Him, we will not have any man to fear.

In this message I would like to identify some common fears. I do not want to be theoretical; I want to be practical and pragmatic. And I want to limit our observations to two fears that are common today. If we fear God, we will be delivered from these fears.

The Fear of Loneliness

The fear of being alone, when it is carried to an exaggerated degree, is a form of psychasthenia. People who are obsessed with this fear can't stand to be alone. My friend, today only God can deliver you from the fear of loneliness.

A pastor who does any counseling at all encounters many cases of marital problems in which couples are not well mated. He will often ask the question of women, very fine Christian women generally, "Why did you marry this man who is so inferior to you, who is on a much lower level than you are?" The answer women give – I've heard it again and again – is this: "Well, I was getting up in years, and I was afraid I might have to go through life alone." I want to say to you that most of them wish they *had* gone through alone because loneliness is something they should not have feared at all.

The bunco squad of the police department will tell you today that the confidence men, especially in Southern California, prey on unsuspecting folk, both men and women, who are alone and lonely.

A number of years ago a book came out by a single woman who was the editor of a popular magazine. The title of the book was *How to Live Alone and Like It*. But when you read her book, you know she was whistling in the dark and singing in the rain. She had not solved her problem at all.

Many young people are afraid to take a stand for Christ because they've reached that age where they have herd instinct, and they say, "What would the gang say? I'd lose my friends. I have the feel of the pack, and I want to be with them. If I take a stand for Christ, I will lose my friends, and I will be alone."

Likewise there are multitudes of older men and women today who could take a stand for Jesus Christ, but they are saying, "What would my friends say? What would my business associates think? What would my social cronies think of me if I took a stand for Christ?"

Let me say to you carefully that multitudes are going into a lost eternity because they are afraid of man. They ought to be afraid of God.

There's no reason to be afraid of loneliness. God's men have always been lonely men. They have lived alone and liked it. Noah was not invited out to all the social functions of his day. Noah stood alone for God. Abraham may have been the most popular man in Ur of the Chaldees. It was a city with a high civilization. Archaeology tells us that life in Ur of the Chaldees was pleasant in Abraham's day. Undoubtedly he had many friends and was successful in business. One day God called him. And, my friend, it meant loneliness for that man for the rest of his life.

Daniel was in a foreign court, which was bad enough, but this man took a stand for God. Probably no man has ever lived a more lonely life than did Daniel.

Saul of Tarsus may have been the most popular Pharisee in Jerusalem. But Saul of Tarsus one day met Jesus Christ, and that man walked alone during the rest of his life.

Martin Luther had a great many things to take into consideration when the truth of justification by faith broke over his soul. When he looked about him, he saw that all of his friends were on the opposite side. One day that man took a stand for God, and it paid. He made this statement later on, "One with God is a majority."

My friend, to the man or the woman who will take a stand for Jesus Christ and will face the fear of mankind, God says,

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. (Isaiah 43:2)

Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)

The Lord Jesus said to His own when He was leaving them and they were to face difficult days,

I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. (John 14:18)

The word *comfortless* is the Greek word *orphanos*. We get our word *orphans* from that. Jesus said, "I will not leave you orphans – I will come to you." Then He said to them before He left,

... lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

My friend, to be a man-pleaser for fear of loneliness is to deny yourself fellowship with God who will never forsake you and never leave you lonely. Paul, near the end of his life, could write,

At my first defense no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. (2 Timothy 4:16, 17)

Multitudes down through the ages have overcome this awful fear, this fear of loneliness, by taking a stand for Jesus Christ.

The Fear of Death and Judgment

The fear of death and judgment is the final fear that I'd like to mention to you. I know that at the present hour the fact of judgment after death is called a superstition, that it is considered a hangover from the Dark Ages, or that we can dismiss it as psychological vestigial remains from the Paleozoic period.

My friend, today death and judgment are an awful reality. You may have your brain washed by modern thinking, but you never get rid of death and judgment.

I heard a whimsical story of a man who went to the psychiatrist. When the psychiatrist asked, "What's your trouble?" the patient said, "I owe a man \$5,000 and I can't pay it. It has preyed on my mind so much that I actually think I'm losing my mind. I can't even sleep at night."

"Have you signed a note?"

"No."

"Was anybody a witness to it?"

"No."

"Well, the thing for you to do is to forget it. Since it has been bothering you, the solution is to get it out of your mind. Now I'm going to rub it out of your mind so you'll actually forget it."

The psychiatrist did such a wonderful job that the fellow got up off the couch and said, "I don't even remember the name of the man that I owe money to." He started to leave.

The psychiatrist said, "Just a minute. You owe me \$50.00 for that treatment."

The man asked, "What treatment?"

My friend, you may not be brainwashed like that, but multitudes of people in this society in which we live *are* brainwashed. And you can't dismiss death and judgment with a wave of the hand. We do well today to fear death and judgment. The Scripture says,

He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. (Proverbs 29:1)

Paul went in before Felix, the Roman governor, not to defend himself but to present to him the claims of Christ. The record in Acts 24 says that he reasoned with Felix concerning *righteousness*, the righteousness of Christ; *self-control*, how Christ could control a man; and then the third thing, *judgment to come*. In other words, if Felix turned his back on Jesus Christ, he was going before a holy God, and it would be a frightful eternity ahead of him. Hearing that, Felix trembled with fear and dismissed Paul because he did not want to hear any more about it at all (see Acts 24:25).

The Scripture says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ...” (Proverbs 9:10). Fear of the Lord is a reverential fear. It is not a fear which is base or craven. Rather, it is a fear of God that comes through reverence, knowing that our God is a high and holy God and that He must punish sin.

The Scriptures give a beatitude to those who fear the Lord: “... Blessed is the man who feareth the LORD ... (Psalm 112:1). This week I discovered a verse that I don’t remember noticing before:

Happy is the man that feareth always, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief. (Proverbs 28:14)

It is amazing how up to date that verse is. There’s the stimulating stage of fear – “Happy is the man that feareth always,” stimulated by fear and brought to a high and holy God through Christ. “But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” is the paralyzing stage, my beloved. One of the things that is said of the apostates in the last days is that they feed themselves without fear:

These are spots in your love feasts, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; clouds they are without water, carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. (Jude 12)

Today God has put fear in your heart. That fear, my beloved, can be your salvation, or it can be your undoing. Fear is not something that is always base or craven. If it’s a fear of God, it is good. However, if you are fearing men today and living to please them, it is a terrible thing.

I never shall forget the night that word came on the radio that the New London School in East Texas had exploded and that over three hundred boys and girls had been killed. I was speaking the next morning on a radio program in Dallas, Texas, and on that broadcast I directed everything I had to say to the parents and loved ones of those boys and girls. We had cards and letters from New England, from Cuba, from Mexico – from all over the country. A friend of mine, a former schoolmate, was a pastor in the East Texas oil fields at the time of the explosion. He told me this story:

“In the parish in which I was the pastor, there lived a man who had become suddenly rich. He was a Texan who had become oil rich, even had put up a small refinery and had already made several millions of dollars. He had built a lovely home. He had a wife and two fine boys. The wife and two boys were Christians, but the man was the worst blasphemer I have ever met in my life. I’ve never heard a man talk as that man would talk. He would blaspheme God and curse God. His wife was so concerned about him that she asked me to go see him. I went to see him, and I had never been treated like that in my life – he cursed me from the time I opened my mouth until I got out of earshot. He called me everything that was in the book and some things I didn’t know were in the book. He was vile. His wife and one of his little boys took sick during the flu epidemic, and both died at the same time. I went over that night to see him again.

“There sat the father and his one remaining little son. When I went over and sat down beside them and began to talk, he began to abuse me again, and curse – I’ve never heard anything like it! It was vile beyond description. He repeatedly blasphemed God’s name. There was nothing left for me to do but get up and walk out of there, which I did. When I conducted the funeral, the man would not even speak to me. After that experience he became more vile, but all of the love

that he had had for his family (and that seemed to be the only thing about the man that was a redeeming feature) was now turned to his little boy who was left.

“Well, that little boy was in the New London School when the explosion occurred. When the man heard of the explosion, he went out to that school and searched through the rubble like a madman until he found the torn and twisted and broken body of his little boy. He took it in his arms and walked up and down that schoolyard like a maniac until someone actually had to take it away from him and take it to the funeral home. You know, I felt it was my duty to go and talk with him, so that night I went over to that big home. I went in, and there was that little white casket, and there he sat in the same place he had sat before. I just steeled myself for the cursing that I was to get. I was afraid to say anything. I just sat down. Then that great big hulk of a fellow looked up – and he hadn’t cried before – but now there were tears in his eyes. Instead of cursing me, he said, ‘God has been after me all the time. He’s tried to speak to me all my life, and I turned my back on Him. He took my wife and my other little boy, and I knew He was talking to me. But I was afraid of what people might say – those I worked with and was associated with. Oh, what a coward I’ve been! And now God had to take this one. Well, God can have me now.’ And that man got down on his knees and took Christ as his Savior.”

The last time I saw that pastor friend of mine he told me that the oil man was still serving God.

Friend, today you do well to fear God. But if you trust Him, have committed your life to Him, have taken Him as Savior, then you can say with David,

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.... (Psalm 23:1, 4)

And it’s only then that you can experience the truth of the Scripture that says, “... Perfect love casteth out fear ...” (1 John 4:18).

Maybe you have never trusted Christ; or if you have, you have been afraid to take a stand for Him. Has fear filled your heart—fear of men or fear of something else? My friend, bring your fears to God and fear Him. When you fear Him, you will have no one else to fear.

What Do You Do With Your Past?

Today, as you look back over your shoulder, what do you see? Do you see that which brings joy and satisfaction to your heart? Or do you see that which brings distress, heartbreak, and shame to your life? I'm wondering – are we prepared to make a true assessment, a regular inventory, of this past year, with all of its happenings as far as we are concerned?

Well, there's one axiom that we can lay down for all the years that preceded it: The past is gone, and there is positively nothing that we can do about it. You and I cannot change one event or one experience.

In a great American drama, one of the first ever written, titled "The Great Divide," one of the leading characters says this, "Wrong is wrong from the moment it happens until the crack of doom, and all the angels in heaven working overtime cannot make it different or less by a half."

May I say to you that this might be true in American drama, but Paul the apostle said that there is something a Christian can do about the past. In fact, Paul made it very personal. Paul said that there was something that *he* did concerning the past. Will you listen to him:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13, 14)

He says, "This *one* thing I do." That is a simple statement of the simple life. In the complex civilization in which we are living, we need to sharpen it down to one point and be able to say, "This *one* thing I do." Most of us today, even in Christian work, are busy with pots and pans as Martha was. We are busy with this and that, and we have quite a few things we are attempting to bring to a boil. But the interesting thing is that we don't seem to be able to watch all of them.

But Paul says, "This *one* thing I do." Call it the power of concentration if you will, or call it the consolidation of purpose, or call it singleness of heart. Call it anything, but it's something that is needed in our Christian lives today. In fact, it is *Bible* all the way through. David said this: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after ..." (Psalm 27:4). David had reduced his life to the lowest common denominator. In this day of nervous activity, this day of ceaseless motion, this day of building tensions – oh, to reduce our lives down to this one point and be able to say, "This one thing I do."

What is this one thing that Paul did? Well, I lift out only one phrase from Philippians 3:13: "Forgetting those things which are behind." As we look back, there are many things that we are to forget. And this is what Paul did with a great deal of his past.

On the other hand, God gave us memories, and there are certain things we are to remember. As Someone has put it, "God gave us memories so that we could have roses in December." The Bible has a great deal to say about remembering. Like a bugle blast, the word *remember* goes all the way through the Word of God. God says to man, "Remember!" He said to the children of Israel, when He brought them out of the land of bondage, "Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage ..." (Exodus 13:3). They were to remember this and never forget it. You find as you go through the Scripture – and it's quite interesting to notice – how the word *remember* is usually associated with God and the word *forget* is associated with man. God is the One who remembers better than we do. You find toward the beginning of Genesis that God remembered Noah. And you find man is constantly forgetting until finally the

psalmist sums it all up by saying, “They forgot God, their Savior ...” (Psalm 106:21). And that was tragic. They were not to forget God!

The Scriptures are clear on the fact that to forget certain things is sin. All the way through the Bible He says to us, “Remember.” “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth ...” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). And even after you leave this life, my beloved, you are still called upon to remember, and you’ll remember throughout the endless ages of eternity. It is in Luke 16 that Abraham in sheol said to the rich man yonder in torment, “Remember.” And to take a memory like his into eternity, my friend, wouldn’t need much fire to make it a hell!

Although there are some things that we are to remember, there are other things that we are to forget. In the biography of Richard III – that villain who wore a crown – the author said of him, “He forgot the things he should have remembered, and he remembered the things he should have forgotten.” And how true this is of many of us today. There are certain things we should remember, but there are certain things that we should forget. Many a man goes through life shackled and crippled because he will not forget the things he should forget.

We are not dealing here in generalities. What are some of the things we are to forget? I want to deal with specifics and mention some of them – not all of them, I’m sure – but some of them.

Stupidities

The first one that I would like to mention is stupidities or blunders. We should forget our blunders. What blunderers we all are, and what blunders we make! Or perhaps I’m wrong in including you. Perhaps you do not commit blunders, but I do. To be frank, we all make blunders, don’t we?

Well, let’s forget them. In “forgetting the things which are behind,” we are to forget our blunders. Sometimes we put our clumsy hands on the heartstrings of a friend and do damage that we did not mean to do. I imagine there are some even today who are saying, “Oh, as I look back over the past year, I said something I wish I had not said. I wish I had bitten off my tongue.” Or, “I did something this past year I’m sorry I did. I would not have done it intentionally for anything in the world.”

My friend, may I say this to you: Correct what you’ve done and then forget it! “Forgetting those things which are behind.” As you know, Simon Peter was a great blunderer. Matthew 14:28-31 records the incident of Peter walking on water. Peter said to our Lord out yonder on the Sea of Galilee, “Bid me come unto thee on the water.” Now don’t say that Simon Peter didn’t walk on the water because he did. He started out and probably took quite a few steps. But, you see, this fellow was so in the habit of stumbling that he even had to stumble walking on water! He took his eyes off his Lord, saw those boisterous waves and began to sink.

Then you may recall the incident yonder at Caesarea Philippi:

When Jesus came into the borders of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:13-16)

Having given that glorious confession of faith, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” he later opened his mouth and said something he should not have said. In Matthew 16:21-23, when our Lord forewarned the disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die, Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him. “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” What a blunderer!

And then yonder as they left the Upper Room, our Lord said, “This night you will forsake Me. As sheep are scattered, tonight you will be scattered” (see Matthew 26:31-35). And Simon Peter said, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Again, what a blunderer.

But, thank God, this man Peter knew how to get up, dust himself off, forget those things that were behind, and press on to those things which were before him. This man on the day of Pentecost, without mentioning his own base denial, stands up before his countrymen and says,

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

It brought conviction, and thousands turned to Christ!

May I say to you that Paul also was a blunderer – Peter didn’t have a monopoly on it, you know. In Acts 15:36-39 Paul could say in effect, “I don’t want John Mark with me. He failed on the first missionary journey, and I will not give him a second chance.” It was a mistake not to give John Mark another chance, and there came a day when Paul acknowledged he had been wrong. In his final epistle, his swan song, he wrote: “Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). Paul blundered, but he corrected it and went on.

Sensitivities

What is a sensitivity? Well, that’s the quality or state of being sensitive. To our stupidities of the past we add our sensitivities.

We are living in an age in which transportation and communication, the increase of population, mass production, and urban life have brought us all together. And we are closer than we have ever been. When you get people close together, they are going to rub against each other. And when you rub any two things together, you get friction. And when you get friction, you get aggravation – and none of the major oil companies have an oil product that will relieve this kind of friction!

Our contemporary society is a hotbed of rivalries and competition and alienations and personality conflicts. In this rough-and-tumble day in which we live, my friend, you are going to get hurt. Somebody is going to offend you. You’re bound to be wounded in life’s struggle. What are you to do? Oh, how many people up to this present moment are still nursing a grudge and a hurt. Today you may be carrying ill feelings and spreading among God’s people disruption and disturbance. What are you to do? Forget them! “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

There is a plant that is peculiar to the American continent. It is known as the sensitive plant. Its botanical name is *mimosa pudica*. The characteristic of this little plant is that the minute it is touched by human hand, the stalk withers and the leaves curl up and close tightly.

There are a lot of human beings who are *sensitive plants* in America today. And they come in under the classification of *mimosa pudica*. Oh, my friend, don’t let your life be ruined!

In the Bible, the Book of Esther tells about a man who was like that. His name was Haman. He was a little man, little in mental stature, little in his emotions, little in his character. He was the great anti-Semite, and do you know what teed him off? Well, the king of Persia, Ahasuerus, had elevated Haman to the highest position in the kingdom and had made him prime minister. At the entrance to the city there was a judge, just a petty judge, by the name of Mordecai. Word had been sent around to all the politicians that since Haman had been promoted to such a high office, they were to bow before him. And they all bowed, except that little fellow Mordecai.

Now Mordecai was little physically, but he had great moral courage. He refused to bow. You see, he was a Jew who was true to his God. He had been taught from the Old Testament that he was to worship no one except the Lord his God; so he just would not bow, that was all. You would think that Haman as the prime minister would be big enough to overlook it. But not Haman. Haman went home and complained to his wife – you really find out about a fellow in what he tells his wife! He said to her, “Here the king has lifted me up and made me prime minister, and I am in this exalted position, but I’m not happy because there is a little fellow by the name of Mordecai who won’t bow to me!” Because his feelings were hurt, he started a wave of anti-Semitism!

My friend, don’t be little. Some people today are bleeders, hemophiliacs, and I am told that the bleeding cannot be stanchied. Also some folk are “bleeders” in the social realm. They get pinched or hurt, and they start *bleeding* – and there are not blood transfusions to keep them alive.

Oh, my friend, today as you look back into the past, have you received personal injury? Then forget it. “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

Successes

There is a third thing that we are to forget: our successes. We are to forget not only our stupidities, not only our sensitivities, but also our successes. Candidly, success is the most difficult of all to forget. Paul could say this: “... I have learned, in whatever state I am, in this to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ...” (Philippians 4:11, 12). To abound, to be successful, is most difficult to forget.

Dr. Harry Ironside used to tell the story of what happened to him in Grand Rapids. He went there every year to speak at Mel Trotter’s mission while Mel Trotter was still alive. One year when he went up there, he found that a fine-looking new hotel had been built and that he was booked in this new hotel, up on the top floor in a suite of rooms! He had never had anything like that before. It was luxury personified. He went around just looking at everything in the room, all brand new. He came at last to the door, for they had to publish the price of the room. When Dr. Ironside saw the price, he went immediately to the telephone, called Mel Trotter, and said, “Look, Mel, you don’t have to put me in a room like this! If you could just get me a room somewhere with a desk so I can study and a bed for me to sleep in and a washbasin so I can wash my face, that’s all I want, and that’s all I’m accustomed to.” Mel Trotter, in his characteristic manner, said, “Look, Harry, the manager of that hotel was saved several years ago at the mission. He was an alcoholic, a drunk. He’s never been able, he says, to repay me. And so when he put up this new hotel, he said, ‘I’ll reserve the top floor suite for every speaker you have.’ Now, Harry, it won’t cost me a penny, and it doesn’t cost the mission a penny. Learn how to *abound* for the next week.”

It is hard to know how to abound, my beloved. Many of us know how to be abased, but very few of us know how to abound. You and I live in a land where success is the watchword. In

America we measure a man with the dollar sign. How much money has he made? Has he been a success in business? We measure a man by the schools where he was educated, by his job, and by his influence. My beloved, these values I think are wrong. Many a man is called a success who is a sorry failure at home. Many a person today has a name of fame that makes the headlines but is a rotten failure in marriage.

Do you know that Samuel, one of God's men, was a failure in his home? Oh, I tell you, his life sounds like a success story until you read the following verses that tell of his failure:

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first-born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beer-sheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after money, and took bribes, and perverted justice. (1 Samuel 8:1-3)

What a failure he was as a father! My brother, if you have made money this past year, if you have attained the position you were after, may I suggest this as a friend: *forget it!* "Forgetting those things which are behind." We do well to forget our successes.

Sorrows

May I mention the fourth thing briefly. We are not only to forget our stupidities, our sensitivities, and our successes, but we are also to forget our sorrows. Perhaps this past year the death angel knocked at the door of your home – he knocked at many. It may be that tragedy came your way and sorrow fills your heart.

My friend, I do not mean to be pessimistic, but if sorrow did not come, it *will* come. The death angel is no respecter of persons. He knocks at the door of the palace of a pharaoh and the hovel of a peasant. He pays no attention to the status of the individual. He knocks at all doors. He will knock at your door.

If tragedy *did* come your way and sorrow did fill your heart, may I say to you kindly: forget it. "Oh," you say, "you're not asking me to forget my loved one?" No. But forget your sorrow. I receive many letters that ask, "Why did God let this happen to me?" My friend, God let it come to you as a child of God for a definite reason. Will you listen to Him?

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4)

God has let you, child of God, go down through the valley of the shadow of death in order that He might comfort you. Neither I nor anyone else can comfort you. I disagree with the people who tell me, "You said something that comforted my heart." No, my friend, if your heart was comforted, it was God who did it. He is the God of all comfort. He alone can comfort you. And He comforts you so that you in turn can go to someone else, and His Word can bring comfort through you.

King David had a little son born to him and, according to the record in 2 Samuel 12, that little one hung in the balance between life and death. David went in before God, fasting. He was

down on his face before God, and you could hear him weeping. After a week the little one died, and the servants were afraid to tell David, thinking that he might be so distraught he would do himself bodily harm. David saw that they were whispering and turned and asked, "Is the child dead?" They told him, "Yes." David arose and washed his face, changed his clothes, and went to the house of the Lord and worshiped, then went home and had a good dinner. Even the servants couldn't keep quiet. They came to him and asked, "How is it that when the little one was still alive you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead you are no longer mourning?" David was God's man, and in concluding his reply he said, "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." In other words, "I'll forget the things that are behind, and I'll move toward the things that are ahead."

Friend, I say it kindly, forget your sorrows.

Sins

Not only are we to forget our stupidities, our sensitivities, our successes, and our sorrows, but we are to forget our sins, too. What do you do with your sins? The Word of God says to confess them. Confess them promptly to God, and then forget them, my friend, forget them.

I sometimes think that God gets tired of our reminding Him of our past sins. Of course, we are to correct what we have done when we have injured some person. But after we have dealt with the thing and confessed it, He says to forget it – "forgetting those things which are behind." Confession is to be made to God privately – not publicly – and when we have done that, then we are to forget the sin.

Oh, to take the book of the past, tie it with the red ribbon of forgiveness (for that red speaks of the blood of Christ), seal it with love, and then mail it to an address which David gives us: "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Psalm 88:12). I don't know the location of the "land of forgetfulness." I don't know whether it is north, east, south, or west. Wherever it is, it is the proper place to send the failure of your past – "forgetting those things which are behind."

On the other hand, perhaps your sins are not forgiven, or perhaps you are not *sure* they are forgiven. May I ask this personal question? Would you like to wipe out the past, with all of its sins and all of its stains? Would you like to know, as far as your past is concerned, that all is forgiven? Well, God will not only forgive you your sins, friend, He will do something else: He will *forget* them. God says:

... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.
(Jeremiah 31:34)

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

God says that He has put our sins behind His back, and He won't turn around. He will forget them.

In closing, let me tell you a story that comes out of my native state of Texas. Years ago out on the plains of South Texas a ranch house caught on fire one night. Quite suddenly it went up in a blaze. There were a father and mother and several children in that family. All died in the fire with the exception of one little girl about six years old. She came crawling out of that burning

inferno, horribly burned on the face. Neighbors took her in. Doctors were called, and they worked with her and nursed her back to health. But the little girl did not have a living relative, so they sent her to Dallas, to the Buckner Orphanage.

Dr. Buckner met her at the train. There she was, a little six-year-old girl all alone, her eyes red with crying and her face horribly scarred. He went up to her and asked, "Are you Mary?"

She said, "Yes. Are you Dr. Buckner? You'll have to be my Daddy and my Mama both. I've lost mine."

He promised he would do his best. He took her out to the home, and she got acquainted with the other children. As you know, sometimes children that age can be rather cruel, even brutal. On one occasion Dr. Buckner had to be out of town, and when he returned all the other children came running, and he put his arms around them and kissed them. Then he saw little Mary standing over to one side. She'd been weeping again, for the children had told her she was ugly. They had told her how horrible she really looked.

So Dr. Buckner went over to little Mary and said to her, "Mary, why didn't you come and kiss Daddy Buckner like the rest?"

"Daddy Buckner, I know I'm ugly. I know I'm awful-looking. You wouldn't possibly want to kiss me. If you'll just say that you love me, that'll be enough."

Do you know what Dr. Buckner with that great heart did? He took her up into his arms, and he kissed those little scarred cheeks. He said to her, "Daddy Buckner loves you just as much as he loves any of these others. You're just as pretty to me as any other."

Oh, my friend, I was that burned child. Sin is what had scarred me. I came to the living God and repented with bitter tears. He forgave me, and through His written Word He said, "I see you in Christ. I accept you in the Beloved. You are lovely to Me. You are My son. You can call Me Father. And someday you will stand before My throne without spot or blemish."

Friend, we are to forget those things which are behind, and we are to look to Jesus today.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

What Do You Do With Your Future?

Are you entering this year as an unguided missile? Multitudes are – including many Christians – and before the year has concluded, they will have done an inestimable amount of damage. The entire human family faces this coming year with mingled feelings, different degrees of uncertainty, misgivings, and insecurity. “What does the future hold for me?” is a reasonable question that every normal individual is bound to ask.

If I could peer into a crystal ball and determine every event that will take place in the future, I’d be the most popular person in Los Angeles. Washington would be calling me – I’m confident of that. The White House would be in close touch with me, and the capitals of the world would make contact. Also, every car driving out to the Santa Anita Race Track would come by my place! My friend, today many are posing as prophets, and they say, “I predict so-and-so for this coming year.” But no man can know the future. No man stands in such a unique position.

There is an axiom that we can put down, and it is this: The past cannot be changed. It is likewise axiomatic that the future cannot be known. As we scan the horizon, looking for the dawn of a new day, we cannot see clearly. Anything that’s in the future must be very hazy to us. In fact, there is a total blackout as far as being able to determine what the future holds. And the Scriptures make that very clear to us. The writer of the Proverbs stated it well:

Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. (Proverbs 27:1)

And you’ll find that Isaiah had a great deal to say along this line. In speaking of evil men, he used language like this:

Come, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. (Isaiah 56:12)

Many prognosticators – as they look into the new year – are predicting prosperity. Well, they could be right and they could be wrong. No man knows the future at all. And that’s what James says (if we have a text at all, the following verse must be it):

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the next day. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. (James 4:14)

You see, it’s not that the future is unknown. It’s not that time is like a runaway truck going down a grade on the Ridge Route, careening from side to side, without brakes or a steering wheel, and the only thing sure is that it will crack up at the bottom of the hill. Time is not like that. There is Someone today at the controls. There is Someone who does know the route. There is a mighty hand upon the steering wheel of time, my beloved. God knows the end from the beginning. And the writer of the psalms expresses it in a very, very significant manner: “...From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2). In the Hebrew language it is really more picturesque than that. Literally it is “from the vanishing point of eternity past to the vanishing point of eternity future, thou art God.” Today there is calm about God’s throne as He enters into the future, because known unto God is everything that is in the future. So, you see, today the

difficulty is not that the future is unknown, because the future is not unknown. It is man who is uncertain. Man is the unknown quantity in the equation of life. Man is the one for whom you have to put down an “x.”

Listen to James 4:14 again. “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the next day.” Why don’t we? Well, because the difficulty is within ourselves. “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Today your life and my life are like the vapor that appears on the hillside, and the oncoming sun drives it away. Here in Los Angeles we are like a little bit of smog. That’s all we are. It appears for a little while, and then it just disappears. Isaiah was quoting our Lord when he said:

The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of the LORD bloweth upon it; surely the people are grass.
(Isaiah 40:6, 7)

My friend, today your life and my life are just like the grass that’s out in the front lawn. It won’t take much of a frost to kill it. Or in the summer neglect watering your lawn for awhile, and it won’t be long until it disappears. Your life and my life today are like a little bit of mist on a hillside or like a little grass in the valley.

The Scriptures describe it further by saying it is like the flight of a bird, the passage of a bird out of darkness through a window into a lighted room and then out another window into the darkness. It is like the passage of a ship in the night. Because of the brevity of life, you and I look vainly into the future, and God says to us that we know not what a day will bring forth.

Now I’d like us to make a brief analysis of our lives. There is a verse of Scripture to which I’d like to turn your attention. It is filled with a wealth of meaning. Notice carefully:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

What is your life? Well, your life is body, soul, and spirit. We are triune beings. Let’s look at these three different components into which you and I are divided.

The Body

The Greek word Paul uses for the body is interesting. *Soma* is the word. The body is the somatic side of us, and we’re hearing so much of it – the physical and the material. The emphasis is right at that point today. Everything in this life is geared to it. The entire program of the world is directed toward the physical man. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards promote pastes and powders, perfumes and pills for the physical man; there are liquids and soaps and shampoos and tonics, and each one of them contains a “miracle” ingredient. They come in boxes and bottles and tubes and in plastic containers. You can pour them on, you can sprinkle them on, you can rub them on, or you can get the large economy size and go swimming in the gooey stuff. Also, there is a phenomenal interest in health foods and in diets of every description and in exercises for physical fitness. All these things are designed to make you a new person physically – take inches off the waist and add years to your life span.

My beloved, the body is important. It is one-third of man. We're told that it is made up of fifteen chemical elements. Some waggish chemist years ago figured that if you took man all apart and collected each of these fifteen chemical elements and sold them on the market, at that time they would have sold for \$0.98. But don't let that disturb you, because inflation has increased your value considerably. However, this same waggish chemist went on to find that there is enough phosphorus in us to make the heads on eleven matches and enough lime in us to whitewash a chicken coop. Sometimes we say, "My, So-and-so has a lot of iron in his system." Well, he has only enough to make three shingle nails. And sometimes a fellow comes to the conclusion that some little girl is all sugar. May I say to you that there's not enough sugar in her to sweeten a cup of cold coffee.

My friend, man physically is not very much. His body is not very valuable. Actually, it disintegrates right back into the earth. "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

However, may I say to you today that God has put a value even on the physical man, and for the Christian He says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

But only one-third of man, at most, is physical. When you consider the relative value of the body, you must turn to the words of our Lord when He says, "Is not the life more than food and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:25). The whole philosophy of the world is expressed in a verse of Scripture:

And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die. (Isaiah 22:13)

That's such an important verse that Paul quoted it in 1 Corinthians 15. He quoted it in order to be able to say that no Christian can live by that philosophy of life because these bodies that we are living in today are crumbling; they're falling down; they're fading away. John Adams, second President of the United States, after he'd passed the age of 90, was taking a walk one day in Boston, Massachusetts. He met a friend who said, "How are you today, Mr. Adams?" He said, "Well, I'm fine, but this house that I live in is growing very feeble, and I suspect I'll be moving out of it before long."

Oh, I don't mean to be a pessimist, but look around you at the throngs of people. One out of one hundred will not be here next year. You won't be here long, my friend. Isaiah again says, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils" (Isaiah 2:22). This is very picturesque language that Isaiah uses. Literally it is, "Cease ye from man, whose breath stands tiptoe in his breathing places." My friend, when you breathe it out, you do not know whether you're going to pull it back in or not. And one of these days you won't. Because of that fact, as we look into the future it must be with an element of uncertainty, for man physically is not something you can depend upon.

The Soul

Paul says to the Thessalonians that there is another department of man. He calls it the soul. In the Greek language the word is *psuche*. We get our word "psychology" from it, and it is the psychological part of man. Somebody says, "Well, I thought the soul and the spirit were the same." Well, the words are used interchangeably in many passages of Scripture. But the Scriptures also divide the soul and the spirit:

For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.... (Hebrews 4:12)

And only God's Word can divide the soul and the spirit. I won't take the time here to go into the distinction between these two but simply mention them in a cursory way. There is a difference between soul and spirit.

The soulish part of man is the mental part. It is his mind. It is the thing that puts man on a cultural level above all the other creatures that are in this world today. It has disturbed the evolutionist to find in the bodies of certain animals brains that are larger than man's brain. It is hard to explain. But, you see, man is a soul, a *living soul*.

Several years ago there was a battle going on in the collegiate circles. I noticed that during the holidays the college professors and presidents got together, and in one convention a president certainly did tee off and express himself. He deplored our present methods of education with the emphasis on specialization. He pointed out that we are taking men and making them specialists, that we take away from them every subject but the subject they are specializing in, and we are making engineers and physicists and chemists and atomic scientists with no broad basis of education and culture. It is leading to abnormality. We're merely turning out machines today that are like geniuses. But they are robots. And he said that the International Business Machine Company can probably turn them out just as well!

Oh, my friend, there is a part of man that appreciates the better things of life. There is a part of man that *thinks*.

*Man, a thinking being, is defined.
Few use this grand prerogative of mind.
How few think justly of the thinking few.
How many never think who think they do.*

Man is a thinking being, my beloved. And he gives estimations; he determines values; he puts a price tag on everything with which he comes in contact. He says what's important to him. He makes decisions. This is the man who moves through life today.

But our Lord had something to say about him. In the following parable will you note that the reference is to the man's soul and not to his spirit:

And he [Jesus] spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no place to bestow my crops? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? (Luke 12:16-20)

What a picture of man in our day! He makes all of his plans for the future. Man gathers together and accumulates that which he thinks is worthwhile, puts his price tag on them, gives his own

value to them, and then sits back and says that everything is taken care of for the future, not knowing that God requires of him his soul. And in the case of the man in the parable, it was that very night. Because we do not know what a day will bring forth, we cannot boast ourselves of the morrow for we do not know what the morrow holds for us.

The Spirit

Then finally, man is a spirit. When God created man in the Garden of Eden, the record in Genesis 2:7 says that God breathed into his breathing places the breath of life. The “breath” in that passage is spirit. It is the *pneumatōs*, the pneumatic part of man, if you please. And you say to me, “What is the spirit of man?” I do not know how I would have explained it fifty years ago, but I think today we can reach out and put our hands on an illustration that will make clear what the spirit of man is.

When I was in Chicago many years ago, there was a very fine-looking young army officer who attended the services where I was preaching. I got acquainted with him and found out that he had charge of the Nike sites that were all around Chicago at that time. They were guided missiles. He could sit at a desk with a great many gadgets in front of him. He could turn a switch, push a button, move a lever, or he could make certain adjustments that would activate one of those big missiles out yonder. It would have lifted up and started out, and it would have gone exactly where the officer wanted it to go. He said that inside that guided missile there were many little tubes and wires and gadgets, and because of those little things inside, he could guide the missile from the ground.

My friend, when God created man, He breathed into his breathing places the spirit, His own Spirit, so that instead of being down here and guiding a missile up yonder, God up yonder could guide man down here. But something happened. Something happened to the “missile.” And that’s the reason I opened this message by asking, “Are you entering the new year as an unguided missile? Multitudes are.” Because man in the Garden of Eden broke loose and that God-given spirit died within him, God could no longer press a button and guide man. God could no longer speak to man and lead him. The first man went out in rebellion against God.

May I say that when Nike went wrong in the air, it was tragedy, and it meant the destruction of Nike. When man went wrong, it was tragedy. But, honestly, it didn’t mean the destruction of man at all, for God was busy even in the Garden of Eden working to restore the communication and bring man back into fellowship so that again He would be able to push a button and guide man. If you think I’ve stepped over the bounds in an illustration, listen to the language of the Apostle Paul:

So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:8)

When man in the Garden of Eden fell, the spirit within him died as far as God was concerned. No longer did he have contact with God. He was in rebellion against God. And it can be said today, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God,” because even if we wanted to (which we don’t in our natural condition) we could not respond to God when He pushes the button. There is no contact.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. (Romans 8:7)

God says that man has broken loose. No longer can He control him. He goes through this world an unguided missile. Nicodemus was a religious man whom you and I would have passed any moment, but our Lord Jesus said to him in John 3:7, “Ye must be born again.” In other words, “You’ve got to get a new nature. You’ve got to be in Christ.” When you become a new creature, old connections are broken, new connections are made, and again you can respond to the Creator. That’s the reason “ye must be born again.” Now He said to one who is born again:

They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit....The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:5, 16)

When God created mankind, He did not equip us with a steering wheel. God never put a steering wheel on any of us for the simple reason that He wants to guide us by remote control. He wants to lead us and direct us.

Little wonder that when we stand on the threshold of a new year, we peer into the future with uncertainty and ignorance, unable to penetrate the darkness. Why? Because the One at the control panel is up yonder. Some folk attempt desperately to penetrate the future, and some will even plunge defiantly into the future on their own – as unguided missiles. Is that the way you are entering this year? Notice the declaration of the Scriptures:

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 16:25)

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

The fundamental trouble today with all of us is those three little words – “his own way.” We don’t want to go God’s way. We want to go our way.

However, the Lord Jesus said,

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

Paul said yonder in Lystra,

Who in times past allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. (Acts 14:16)

But now God says, “You’ve got to come *My* way.” With great assurance our Lord was speaking to you and me out of the Upper Room and saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Those are dogmatic directions. As a UCLA student said to me several years ago, “That statement is too dogmatic!” I agree with him. It is dogmatic. Truth is always dogmatic. I like it that way myself.

I remember that the first time I went up to The Firs conference grounds in Bellingham, Washington, Mrs. McGee and I drove. I had been to Seattle by train but had never driven before. We spent the night in Portland, and the next morning there was a great deal of fog. When we drove out on Highway 99, I don’t know what happened – we got off 99 somehow – even before

we got out of town, it seemed like to me. We drove around and couldn't get back to where we were supposed to be. I said to my wife, "I don't see how in the world we ever got on the wrong road with both of us driving" – me at the steering wheel and she sitting in her accustomed place. But we did. We got off the main route. And finally I said, "There's only one thing to do, and that's to go back and start all over again." We turned back into Portland, and we started over again. We went into a filling station and asked a young fellow there if he knew the way to Highway 99. He had a broom in his hand and pointed with that broom in five different directions. Finally I asked him how long he'd been there. He said, "Two weeks." I said, "You, then, don't know?" He said he really didn't. So I went across the street. An older man was there opening up another filling station. I said to him, "Do you know the way to get onto Highway 99?"

He said, "I certainly do. You go down here three blocks. There's a street light. You turn right, and you continue that right until you come to another street light. Then go left, and you're on Highway 99."

"Are you sure?"

He looked at me in amazement. "Of course, I'm sure!" Believe me, he was dogmatic! He was dogmatic because he knew what he was talking about.

The Lord Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Friend, have you come this way? Have you come to the One who knows the way into the future? You don't know, I don't know, no man knows, but He knows. Let me give one final word from Scripture.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever. (Isaiah 40:8)

Man is as grass – and the grass withers, but the Word of God abides forever. The Bible, friend, is the only road map we have. God has given us only one road map, and it's His Word. Oh, I wish that I could get you closer to the Word of God. I have one ambition, and that is to get more people into the Word of God. Now I don't mean this practice of sticking it under your arm and carrying it on Sunday morning and saying, "I believe it's God's Word." I mean to really dig in and know what it is all about. I wish I could get you to seriously study the Word of God in order that you might see His road map.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth" – that's you and that's me. "But the word of our God shall stand forever." We stand on the threshold of the unknown future. Paul can stand with you,

Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13, 14)

As you face the future, are you looking to Jesus Christ? Unsaved friend, have you come to Him, the One who is the way, the truth, and the life, the One who can bring you into contact with God and bring you to the Father and restore that relationship?

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2)

Examine your own heart and life. It is so easy to put up a front. It is so easy to use subterfuge. It is so easy to say things that are not true. No wonder that today multitudes have hearts filled with fears and anxiety as they look into the future. They don't know where they are going. None of us know what a day will bring forth. God does. I urge you to put Him at the controls of your life.