

GOD'S PROMISE TO MAKE US

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Mark 1:17.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Corinthians 5:21.

There are three simple things that claim our attention in these two utterances.

I. The Supreme Need.

The supreme need is that we be made. We may speak of this great truth in various ways and by many figures, but when we have gotten to the essential thing back of all metaphor and figure, we have gotten to what is presented in this word -- that the essential thing, the supreme need, is that we be made. The expression, "we might be made," implies some things that we must consider.

It implies that we are in no true sense already made by nature. The Fall was our unmaking, our undoing, and that we are in no true sense made is witnessed to alike by revelation and experience, by the Bible without and the conscience within. You may reject the testimony of the Bible, as set forth in Romans three, but at last you will have to reckon with the fact that your conscience endorses that verdict. You cannot bribe conscience to sanction wrong, or to promote or endorse evil. Your conscience is not infallible, but as far as it goes it sides with God against sin. Therefore, if you reject the testimony of the Written Word, there is a voice within you, insistent and strong, until by persistent sin you silence it, that says you are not made, you are not what God intended you to be.

This word implies that each of us is capable of being made. "We might be made." Is not that the inner significance of all hope, is it not that that gives meaning to struggle against evil, to our conflict with temptation? For what are we struggling? What is the significance of hope except that there is something before us that may be ours, that is something that we may become that we are not? Each of us is capable of being made. Much of the inspiration that one receives as he addresses an audience is derived from the thought of undiscovered possibilities and potentialities in the lives of those who compose it. That is the thing that draws and inspires -- to think that there are people of various ages and in different conditions who are unmade, and that they may be made.

A third implication is that we are not able to make ourselves. We may admit the first two, that we are in no sense already made and that each of us is capable of being made, and deny the third implication that we are not able to make ourselves. Are you willing to admit that you are quite unable to make yourself? We want to have a partnership with Christ in the making of our lives. So many are trying to make themselves. We often talk about self-made men, but in so far as there is any truth in that expression, the truth moves within very severe limits. It is not at all true in the realm of the spiritual. There no man is self-made. Yet we see men trying to make themselves in various ways. There are people who are trying to make themselves by reform. There are people who are trying to make themselves by culture. There are people who are trying to make themselves by social service -- sacrificing themselves for their fellows. There are people who are trying to make themselves by exacting ritual. It is pathetic that these things are happening.

Have any or all of these things ever enabled a person to make himself or herself? We have got to come to this, and the sooner the better for the glory of God, the good of others and our own benefit, that whereas we are in no true sense made, and whereas we are capable of being made, we are totally unable to make ourselves. If ever the thing is to be done, someone else must do it. Our scriptures do not say that we may make ourselves. They say "we might be made." There is One, outside of ourselves, Who is a mighty Maker.

II. The Gracious Promise.

"I will make you." Someone may say, "What evidence is there that Christ can make me?" Someone may say, "You would not affirm that so emphatically if you knew more about me." I am not concerned to know more about you. I am confident because I know the Lord, and He has never yet undertaken to make a man or woman who gave Him a chance without succeeding. The pages of history are replete with illustrations.

Take Simon, irresolute, uncertain, impetuous, with something of the coward in him, a difficult man to handle. Christ said, "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be Peter; thou art a wobbler; thou shalt be a rock. Simon, if you give me a chance to make you, I will make you something worthwhile." And did He? Let the day of Pentecost answer, let the two letters which he has given us answer. Christ can give steadiness to any impetuous, impulsive, rash and erratic man or woman. "I will make you."

Take Zacchaeus, the despised publican, charging extortionately and living handsomely on the extortions; a man whom nobody respected because he did not respect himself. Rich man as he was, he had no hesitation in climbing up a tree to see the show. Christ came to that tree, looked up and saw little Zacchaeus, and said, "Come down, for today I must abide at your house; and I am going to make you." "Make me? Make me what?" "To make you the first philanthropist." And He did. "Lord, if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." There Zacchaeus stands a witness throughout all time to the amazing power of Christ to make a man who was less than a man when He found him.

Take that poor harlot who came to the Lord at midday, while He was seated on the parapet of Jacob's well. You know the story. In effect He said to her, "You are unmade, wholly undone. But you are not hopeless. You are material that I can do something with, if you give Me a chance." She gave Him a chance. What did He made of her? He made her a witness and sent her back to the very place where she had sinned, and laid there the foundation for a New Testament church.

Take the case of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Christians. Christ said to him, "I will make you." Saul was cultured, proud, aristocratic, refined to his finger-tips, a perfect scholar and gentleman, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and yet he was not made. But Christ said, "I will make you, if you will let Me." In the hands of the mighty Maker Paul was made, and he penned thirteen or fourteen books in the New Testament.

Take the case of William Carey, the Hackleton shoemaker. Was that all he was capable of doing? Christ saw further than anyone else into the possibilities of that youth, and said to him, "Carey, if you will give Me a chance, I will make you." Carey replied, "Lord, I will put myself into Thy hands." The Lord took the material and made Carey the founder of modern missions.

I could never mention the names of all the men and women whom Christ wanted to make, who gave Him a chance, and whom He did make, and is making, and by

their making is enriching the world. What Christ has done for these He can do for you. There is no man or woman that Christ is not able to make. That is the message of the gospel in its largest implication. To me it is a thrilling message.

You will never be made except in the hands of Christ. You will never reach your womanhood at its finest, you will never realize your manhood at its best, except in the hands of Jesus Christ. If you have your highest interests at heart, you will yield to Christ. What He has done and is doing for others, He can do for you. He says to you, "I will make you; I can handle that material, I can do something with you, I can bring something out of you and put something into you that you have never dreamed of, and directly or indirectly the world shall know it." What a challenge!

III. The Essential Condition.

The condition is stated very simply and yet very profoundly in the words, "Come ye after Me." What does that mean? What is it to come after Christ? It means to stand in relation to Him as all those people did whom I have mentioned.

Take the case of Paul. He had splendid prospects; the highest levels of usefulness were awaiting him. He was a man of elaborate training and rich accomplishment, and Christ said, "I want you." "What for?" "I want you. I am not calling you to achievement to begin with, but to suffering. I will show you what things you must suffer for My sake. But I want you. Can you trust Me? Will you give yourself to Me without reservation? Without questioning will you give yourself to Me in a glad and entire abandonment? Will you put all that you are and have at My disposal for all time?" Paul said, "Yes." "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ." We know what Christ did with Paul. The conditions are still the same. "Come ye after me." Come without reservation, in acknowledgment that you are not made, with the sure conviction that you cannot make yourself, and that nobody else can make you other than the Christ Himself. Test Him as others have tested Him, and you will find, as others have found, that He is true.

You say, "How will He make me?" The answer is by breaking you. "He took, and brake, and gave." There is where we shrink and go back. We cannot face being broken. But every man who has made good for God has been broken. You may acknowledge Christ as your Saviour, and every day of your life deny Him as your Lord. You can have Christ as your Saviour, and have self on the throne of your life. "What I want I will have," you say; "I will choose my reading, I will choose my manner of dress, I will determine how I will spend my money, I will say where I am going to live, what I am going to do, the habits I am going to form." When God takes such a one as you He must first of all break in order to make. It is the breaking that makes possible the making, and it is the breaking that we dread.

Are you willing to be made in Christ's way, and on His terms? There is no life like the one He plans for you; there is nothing so great as putting your case in His hands, and your life at His disposal. If you will turn yourself over to Him, the peace of God will take possession of your heart, and its accompanying power, insight and love will enable you to say:

"I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul;
I see the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll;
But I am calm with Thee, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies,
And to the height on which I stand,
No storm nor clouds can rise.
Oh! this is life, Oh! this is joy,
My God, to find Thee so."

Acknowledging quite frankly your supreme need that you be made, and believing His promise to make you, will you accept the essential condition of glad, wholehearted abandonment to Jesus Christ to be done with as He pleases, to be sent wherever He may choose to send you, trustfully placing yourself at His disposal? That is what He wants you to do. The end of the exposition is the beginning of the action. So let us sing:

"Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way,
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay,
Mould me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still."