

"A LITTLE FARTHER"

"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

In visiting the places where the Lord Jesus walked and wrought, the three which were the most impressive and memorable were the Garden of Gethsemane, the skull-shaped hill of Calvary, and the Garden Tomb. In the Garden of Gethsemane "he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed." The "little farther" that He went was not far when measured by the tapeline, but what a distance when measured by the actual line of Christian experience. Jesus had taken with Him Peter, James, and John into the very garden of His impending crisis because He was eager for human companionship and sympathy. The disciples were sleepy; He was agonizing. They were dreaming of thrones and crowns, and who would be the greatest in the kingdom; He was thinking of the plan of salvation and how it was to be made possible by dying on the cross. This "little farther" marks the difference in the average, the ordinary, and the out-and-out Christian. This is the explanation why one is ordinary and another is a glowing success. If each of us would do what Jesus did in Gethsemane, namely, go "a little farther," all of us as Christians would be happier, more joyous, and more useful.

When the cup of human guilt was held out to Jesus, His pure heart revolted from the pain and shame. He had the tenderest of human hearts. His feelings were exceedingly sensitive. He dreaded the ordeal and trembled to stretch out His hand to take the cup. He writhed in the thought of drinking its bitter contents. He longed to avoid the ordeal, but, having the redemptive love, Jesus saw that the cup was inevitable. To save, He must die. To find, He must lose. In His distress, He prayed, and His prayer was a cry. "O my Father! If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

The courage and simplicity, frankness, and submissiveness, wisdom, and humility of that prayer make it the most spiritual speech in human language. It is spirituality in a word. Jesus said a great deal about prayer, but the world has learned most from His own immortal prayer in Gethsemane.

Jesus "went a little farther" than anybody else in various fields of activity.

I. In The Conquest Of Temptation.

When He was a young man with the desires and feelings of a normal person, Satan tempted Him fiercely three times, but each time He overcame the temptation. But let us not think that these were all the temptations He had. He was tempted often, but He conquered Satan on every occasion. When temptations come to you, you need to stay close to Christ and to call on Him for help.

II. In Prayer.

How far did He go in prayer that night. One gospel writer says that He went "about a stone's throw," and fell on His face and prayed. He first prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from His lips. Then He prayed, "Not My will, but Thine, be done." When one goes that far in prayer, one is in the glowing light of answered prayer. There was no formality about that prayer of Jesus. It was burning with earnestness, blazing with desire, and baptized in blood. We need to go farther in prayer. If we will go farther in prayer we will go farther in submission, in advancement, in consecration.

III. In Submission To God's Will.

With His life before Him, Christ let God map out the plans for that life. He knew that God's way for Him would lead to a cross, but He did not falter. When He came to the end of the way that cross was waiting for Him and He willingly died upon it. The cross was His goal and nothing could turn His aside from it. Why did He do it? Because He knew this was the Father's will and He joyfully submitted to that will. Christ always did the things that pleased God the Father.

During World War I the steamship Lusitania was on a voyage carrying hundreds of passengers. A German submarine lurked in the depths, bent on death and destruction. Soon a torpedo was loosed toward the Lusitania. The mistress of the sea, mortally wounded, trembled, floundered, and went down. It was a horrible hour. The passengers rushed to the lifeboats, for everyone wanted to live.

S. T. Moodie was on the deck, ready to embark to safety in a lifeboat. But he saw a woman without a lifebelt, a poor woman from the steerage section of the ship. He quickly took off his lifebelt and gave it to the woman. She was saved, but Moodie went down to a watery grave. But Jesus Christ did more than that to save sinful, sinking humanity. He did so because it was the Father's will for Him.

IV. In Demonstration Of Power.

You can't study the life of Christ without being impressed by His power.

(a) He had power over nature.

On board ship one night He fell asleep. Soon a storm arose and the disciples waked Him, saying, "Carest thou not that we perish?" He arose and spoke to the raging storm, "Peace be still." Suddenly the waves were as quiet as a babe asleep on his mother's breast. His friends marveled, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

When the hungry crowds following Him, He took two loaves and five fishes, blessed them and multiplied them, so that more than five thousand ate and were filled.

(b) He had power over disease and death.

A certain woman had been sick for twelve years. Many doctors had ministered unto her, and none could help her. But when she simply touched the hem of His garment, healing power flowed out to her from Him.

Jesus was going into Nain one day, when He met a funeral procession. A poor widow had lost her son, who was her sole support. Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched the young man back to life and restored him to the arms of his mother. He also brought Lazarus back from death unto life.

V. In Sympathy And Understanding.

In whatever sphere or situation that needed sympathy and understanding, Jesus at once entered into it sympathetically and wholeheartedly. If it was a case of sorrow

or want, a circumstance of misfortune, a condition of handicap, a question of perplexity, an issue calling for deep discernment, Jesus was keenly alert and ever ready. People of all classes instinctively felt the warmth of His sympathy and the lift of His power.

You have been in trouble, in need of counsel, in deep and poignant sorrow. In that time of special need a friend or friends came to you, spoke words of comfort and encouragement, put their arms about you, or just looked sympathetically at you. Your heart was comforted, your burden was lifted, your cloud vanished. We should go farther in showing sympathy to those who are in need. Jesus went to Mary and Martha in the dark night of their trouble. How cheered their hearts were!

When it comes to a more sympathetic understanding and a more gracious spirit with reference to others, we can go much farther. When we see a man limping, we do not know what sharp tack or gravel may be in his shoes. A North Carolina pastor told about a young woman, a telephone operator who belonged to his church, who came to him with tears in her eyes. She told him that a day or two before she was making a long-distance connection for a party; the connection was perfected, but the man could scarcely speak. He attempted, but it was a miserable attempt. The young lady operator became angry at the confusion and delay of this man and said cuttingly: "What is the matter? Why don't you tell the man what you want?" The man pulled himself together and said: "Please excuse me, Operator. I have received news of the sudden death of my son. I will soon get myself together so I can talk." "Oh," said the young woman to her pastor, "I was cruel. I can't sleep for thinking about it. He needed sympathy instead of scolding. Of course, had I understood the circumstances, I would have had a different attitude."

VI. In Love.

Our Lord went farther in love than any of us have gone. It was love that caused Him to pray all night on the mountain, and to suffer the agonies of Gethsemane. It was love that led Him to Calvary. And He went far enough to open the door of salvation for every lost soul.

Love opened wide the door for me,
Restored my soul, and set me free;
His life He freely gave, my life to save,
'Twas love that opened wide the door for me.

We should love Him "because He first loved us."

VII. In Helpful Service.

The biographies of some men could read, "He went about making money," and "He went about having a good time," or "He went about seeking to elevate self," or "He went about indulging himself." But here in five words is the biography of the Lord Jesus, "He went about doing good." He used all of His power for others. When He saw anyone who was sick or in trouble or in sorrow, His heart went out to them and He reached out a helping hand.

In the early colonial days John Weatherford preached the gospel of Christ in Virginia. He spoke out boldly for Christ. The high authorities hounded him and

sought to silence him. He won scores of people to Christ, but had to baptize them by night to avoid being seen by the authorities. Finally they put him in prison. Yet they could not stop him from preaching. The crowds filled the jailyard and he would reach his hands through the bars and preach to them. Wicked men came and slashed his hands. A man who wrote the story of this preacher said, "I went to his funeral and when I saw the white scars on his hands, I knew they were the marks of the Lord Jesus."

That is real service to God and humanity. But that is not anything compared to the service Jesus rendered to broken humanity.

VIII. In Influence Over Others.

Christ must have had a dynamic personality, for men from all walks of life were attracted to Him. He could go to a tax-collector's office and say to Matthew, "Follow me," and Matthew left his tax books to become the writer of the first book in the New Testament. He could take a simple profane fisherman like Simon and transform him into Peter, the great preacher at Pentecost. He could take a murderous Pharisee like Saul and change him into Paul, the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. And He still has this same power to change men. He is still making men over and giving them new life.

Herod killed scores of babies and little was thought or said about it. But when the Lindbergh baby was kidnaped the world was upset. This shows the influence of Jesus Christ upon human thought. Women were once little more than slaves, but now they occupy an exalted position, thanks to the influence of Christ. The hospitals all over the world, the children's homes, the care of the aged, all these things attest to the influence of Christ. For more than nineteen hundred years Christ has gone up and down the world touching lives and making them sweeter, better, richer, and fuller.

IX. In Sacrifice.

He did not think of Himself; He thought only and solely of others. He was not selfish; He was magnanimous to the last degree. We speak of the sacrifices we make. How do our sacrifices compare with the sacrifice Jesus made? But for His sacrifice, we would still be in our sins; lost, wretched, and undone.

Going "a little farther" will solve our problems. It will solve our problems between individuals. It will solve home problems. It will help solve any problem. On a cold November morning a judge rose early to catch an early train to go to an adjoining county to hold court that week. When he got to the depot, the newspaper boys were carrying their papers. One came running up to him, barefooted, cold and shivering, as he said: "Mister, buy a paper." The judge, a student of human nature, asked: "What does your papa do, son?" "My papa is dead, Mister, my mother takes in washing. I help her mornings and evenings, before and after school, by selling papers. Mister, buy a paper." The judge, deeply moved, asked him how many he had. "Only eight; I have sold all but eight." The judge ran his hand in his pocket, got out a fifty-cent piece, and said, "Here, son, I will take them all." The boy's eyes danced and gleamed. To the judge's surprise, the boy did not make a dash for home, but inched up closer and closer to him. "Had you better not run home, warm your feet, get some breakfast and go to school? Aren't you cold?" said the judge. "I was cold," he said, his eyes softened by such kindness, "until I found you. I am not cold now." What that boy needed was the warmth of a big heart

like that; a man who would go "a little farther" with him. Has someone gone a little farther with you? How sacred are the memories of such hours!

The spirit of going "a little farther" will settle church problems. If we want to win the lost, we can do it by going "a little farther." All of us need to go "a little farther" with Jesus.

True religion is the reverent acceptance of the Father's will. The Lord Jesus was prepared to submit to the will of His Father. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." The Father's will was the ultimate authority, the perfect wisdom, the consummate love. It is difficult for us to come to that. We know that it is right that He should rule, that all His decrees are wise, that all His ways are best. But it is hard to make the creed of the intellect the submission of the soul. Yet, this is the hallmark of personal Christianity, or spirituality.