

"THE RESOURCES OF THE INNER LIFE"

INTRODUCTION

Henry Drummond once wrote this line about the life of Christ: "Christ's life outwardly was one of the most troubled lives that was ever lived....but his inner life was a sea of glass". Henry Drummond, as most of you know, was a 19th Century Scotsman, converted by Dwight L. Moody to the Christian religion. About 1890, he wrote a little book called The Greatest Thing in the World, which I venture to say more English speaking Christians have read than any other book outside the New Testament. And yet one wonders whether Henry Drummond, with all of his insight and understanding of the life of our Lord, had sufficient accessibility to the inner life of Jesus to say that it was always as smooth as a sea of glass.

I am not prepared to answer that question. This we do know, however, beyond any shadow of doubt - that Jesus did move through the storms that raged around him with a remarkable steadiness.

AN EXAMPLE

For instance, one time early in his public ministry he was preaching in the synagogue of his own home town. He was invited to read the lesson and he did. He read from the book of Isaiah. Then he was asked to comment on the meaning of what he had read. The people were pleased with the way he read the Scripture, but when he began to tell them what it meant, when he began to try to open their eyes to the meaning of the present moment and to enlarge their horizons, they, like many people preferred to be small, preferred to remain blind. They were filled with wrath; they thrust him out; they led him to the brow of the hill that they might cast him down headlong. But, according to Luke's Gospel, "passing through the midst of them he went away".

What was going on inside the mind of our Lord we shall never know. However, this much we do know. We know that when the people of his own home town turned against him, when his own life was in immediate danger, he was not paralyzed by fear nor poisoned by doubt. He was not intimidated, he did not capitulate, he did not fight back. He went his own way, calmly, quietly, steadily. This much we do know, that on this occasion, and on many others, he was able to ride the storm without being ridden by it. He was able to live in the midst of confusion without being confused. He was able to move through violent disturbance without being himself either disturbed or diverted.

HOW DID HE DO IT?

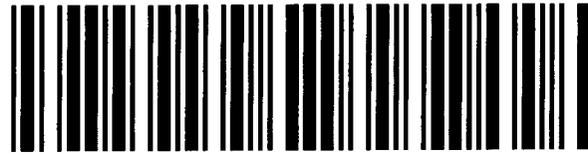
Our question is this: how did he do it? And with that question goes another even though unspoken - can we possibly do the same, to a lesser degree?

But first of all, how did he do it? How did he manage to ride the storms of life and not be ridden by them? Did he have an invisible bodyguard? Was he surrounded, do you think, by a corps of guardian angels that refused to let anything touch him, that kept everything that might disturb him or endanger his life, away from him? Some people, of course, think he had this divine protection. Luke himself may have thought this when he wrote that line "But passing through the midst of them, he went away. Perhaps he was intending to suggest that our Lord was protected from this antagonistic crowd by the aura of his divine nature. I cannot be sure that he

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did not have such heavenly guards, but I would find it difficult to believe that this is the answer to our question. To me, this is not the secret of his steadiness.

You may wonder whether he possessed one of those temperaments that is not easily touched by anything or anyone around him? This might account for this unusual ability to ride the storms of life. And yet as you read the life of Jesus, you find nothing in the story that suggests that quality of steel. There is nothing about him that suggests that cool temperament that's protected by a hard shell of indifference or insensitivity. Everything in the story of Jesus suggests the most delicate sensitivity.

We think of the time that he was in a crowd, surrounded by hundreds of people. One woman was there, behind him, in great distress. She touched his garment; he knew it. Or we think of the time that a young man, bursting with enthusiasm, ran up to him and asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life, real life; Jesus looked on him and loved him. A city was lost in its own folly and blindness; he wept over it. A criminal on a cross, dying beside him on his cross; his heart went out to him. This was no man of steel. This was a man who was sensitive to every thought and movement, to every need and desire of the people who were around him.

This we can be sure of. If he could keep himself upright when the world was upside down, it was not because he kept himself out of the world. He did not live apart from the world, protected from its tragedies and all of the things that make life difficult for people. He lived in the midst of it and almost deliberately exposed himself to the world's pain.

If then, Jesus did not have either divine protection or the human peculiarities of temperament that enabled him to move untroubled through troubled waters, how then did he do it? The answer, I think, is to be found in the resources of his inner life.

AN OUTER LIFE AND AN INNER LIFE

Like all of us, he had an outer life and an inner life. Actually, I suppose, our life is all of a piece, but for the sake of convenience when we talk about it and think about it, we have to think about it in its various aspects, and this is one convenient way to think of the experience we have every day. An outer life and an inner life.

Our outer life consists, as did His, in the things that are happening around us and to us. These things are not always favorable to us. As a matter of fact, they sometimes seem to be aimed directly against us. And they were against Him, too. The circumstances of his life were not always favorable to him, and many of the people with whom he lived his life were slow, stupid and often cruel. His outer life - your outer life - and mine - are made up of things that happen to us, not always favorable to us, and over which we do not always have control.

His inner life, on the other hand, like yours and mine, was quite different. It was the life of his thoughts, his ideas, his ideals, his beliefs, his dreams, his hopes, his ambitions and his prayers. This, you see, was a quite different life. This was a life going on inside of him. It was not entirely independent, mind

you, of his outer life. It was true with him, as it is with us, that exceptional physical demands sometimes overtax the inner life and exhaust its available resources. The body can and often does overdraw its account, and it seems then that the inner life is completely at the mercy of the outer. On the other hand, sometimes the conditions of the outer life draw out of us, as it did with him, and help to develop those essential qualities of the inner life.

What happened to him outwardly he could not always control. If he went without eating, he was hungry and weak. If he went without rest, he was tired and his mind might not have been quite so quick. But on the other hand, what happened inside him, what was going on inside of him, was stimulated, developed by the things on the outside so that as he grew in physical strength, he grew in grace and in power inwardly. The outside pressures ^{FOR him} helped to develop his inner poise and strength. It was the inner life that determined the shape and quality of the outer, and that inner life was fed by streams of energy that kept it strong, so that in the end - picture this, because there is not much more to this meditation than this picture, picture Jesus at the end, having given all of his young life, all of his energy, enthusiasm, and wisdom to start a new order of things that might be called the Kingdom of God. Imagine him standing before Pilate - the Roman governor, unjustly accused, unmercifully deserted and abandoned by all his close friends. When Pilate gave him a chance to answer the false accusations made against him, he stood there and "answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marveled greatly". Not a word in self-defense; not a word in protest or accusation. The time for words had passed. He was the Word. It was the triumph of the inner life over the outward circumstances that threatened to wreck it. Before that foreign governor, who had no interest at all in what Jesus had been trying to do, he could stand in perfect composure, shaken not at all by the storm that was gathering, sure and steady, never more kingly than now when least a King!

CONCLUSION: Our interest in the inner life of Jesus is not purely impersonal and objective. Our interest rests upon one or two facts which I shall mention only briefly here at the end. We know from experience that life is never going to accommodate itself to us. We know from experience - if you don't know it now, the chances are that it won't be too long before you do know it - that there are going to be rough seas ahead. They may be in your own personal life. They may be in the social life of the world. We live on the brink of a world wide eruption. We know this. We also know that when a storm comes there are some people who can ride it and some who are never wrecked by it. We have seen this among our friends. We have seen it recently in the life of Lt. Col. Glenn. What we want to know is what do they have in their lives that enable them to cope so effectively with life. What resources do they have in their inner life that enables them to rise above all the outer circumstances of life no matter how dangerous or disastrous they appear to be.

On the Sunday mornings in Lent this year we shall look at Jesus with this particular thought in mind: the resources of his inner life. And we shall think of them as they relate to our lives - essentials for effective living. Over these next six

weeks of Lent, I should like you to look at him, at his life, and I should like to try to lead you closer to those resources ~~that~~ which he had in the crises of his life so that when the storms of life come into your life, you will not be afraid.

And as we look at him, we will remember what one of his greatest followers said not long after Jesus died: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" With the conclusion in the word of JB Phillips's vernacular English - "This is the reason why we never collapse"

LET US PRAY:

O God draw us to thyself as we find thee in revealed in the life of Jesus, and as we think upon him and enter into the spirit of his life, may his life enter into ours that we may be steadied, ready to meet every emergency, that we may never stagger no matter how uneven the motion of the world may be, and that we may go on our way never complaining about the weather we meet or the things that befall us. Amen

life that in so many ways was apart from the circumstances of the outer life.

What happened inside of him was stimulated and developed by the things on the outside so that as he grew in physical strength, he also grew in grace, power and inner poise. These outside pressures, instead of tearing him apart, helped to build up and develop that inner poise and strength. It was that inner life that determined the shape and quality of the outer, and that inner life was fed by streams of energy that kept it strong so that time and again it emerged victorious over the circumstances of the outer life. We see it dramatized so well in that final scene when our Lord stood before Pilate, the Roman governor, unjustly accused, unmercifully deserted. When Pilate gave him a chance to answer the false accusations made against him, he stood there and said not a word. Not a word in self-defense; not a word in protest or accusation. The time for words had passed. He was the Word. Before that foreign governor, who had no interest at all in what Jesus had been trying to do, he could stand in perfect composure, shaken not at all by the storm that was gathering - sure and steady - never more kingly than now when least a King!

CONCLUSION Our interest in the inner life of Jesus is not purely impersonal and objective. Our interests rests upon one or two facts which I shall mention only briefly here at the end. One thing is this. We know from experience that life is never going to accomodate itself to us. We know from experience (if you don't know it now, the chances are that it won't be too long before you do know it) - that there are going to be rough seas ahead. They may be in your own personal life. They may be in the social life of the world. We also know that when a storm comes there are some people who can rise it and who somehow are never wrecked by it. We see this quality in our friends, and we admire it. We have seen it displayed and dramatized recently in the life of Col. Glenn, and those words he spoke on Wednesday of this past week which summed up his creed and faith are the sort of thing I'm referring to. What we want to know is what is it that they have in their lives that enable them to cope so effectively with life. What resources do they have in their inner lives that enable them to rise above all the outer circumstances of life no matter how dangerous or disastrous they appear to be.

On the Sunday mornings in Lent this year we shall spend time looking at the life of Jesus with this particular thought in mind: the resources of his inner life. We shall think of them and try to relate them to our own lives. We shall look at him, at his life, and I shall try to lead you closer to those resources which enabled him to ride the storms so that when the storms come in your life, you will not be afraid. And as we look at him, we will remember what one of his greatest followers said not long after Jesus died: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" - with the conclusion in the words of JB Phillip's vernacular English - "This is the reason why we never collapse."

LET US PRAY: Draw us to thyself, O God, as we find thee revealed in the life of Jesus. As we think upon him and enter into the spirit of his life, may his life enter into ours that we may be steadied, ready to meet every emergency, that we may never stagger no matter how uneven the motion of the world may be, and that we may go on our way never complaining about the weather or the things that befall us. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Members of the church and visiting friends are cordially invited to share in the warmth and friendliness of the coffee hour that will be held in fellowship hall following this service of worship.

If you are a visitor - a stranger within our gates this hour - we would not only invite you to the coffee hour, but we would encourage you to take a moment following the service to leave with us a record of your visit by signing one of our Guest Books.

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The Announcements are listed for you in the bulletin, and I would draw your attention to the announcement which has to do with the beginning of Lent. Lent begins this coming Wednesday. The forty days of Lent are a time of prayer and preparation for Christians as they approach the great holy day of Easter. To aid and guide you in the observance of this season, we shall be mailing out to all of you tomorrow some helpful materials. There will be a daily devotional booklet "The Sanctuary". And also a daily dime card. We do hope that you will make full and faithful use of these two items, and that you will pledge yourself to regular attendance at our service of worship over these seven Sundays.

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In addition to our regular services, we would also like to encourage you to make use of other special Lenten opportunities services. These we will announce each week in the Sunday bulletin.

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