

# GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

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## SERMON THREE

### THE VIRTUE OF HONESTY

Last night we selected this text in the second chapter of Paul to Titus.

**“For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared onto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”**

I announced last night we would take up the discussion of that text again to-night. I think we left off at this point about the grace of God teaching us, and how it is necessary that we should be taught. The honor of Christ and the salvation of our own souls depend largely upon our holding and practicing proper views of the Scripture.

Ignorance is a sort of heterogeneous compound that neither God nor man can do much with. The fact is, we must know something before we are capacitated to do something, and all intelligent action is based on intelligent thought, and there can be no intelligent thought unless, perhaps, we know some things.

The man who really knows one thing well is on the road to know a great many things, and the trouble, perhaps, with a large mass of humanity is they have never known one thing well.

**“And the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men teaching us”** — instructing us, qualifying us. Teaching us what?

**“That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”**

### NEGATIVE GOODNESS

In plain English, teaching us, **“cease to do evil; learn to do well.”** Conversion is a very common term in the church and in the pulpit. Sometimes we use it in a very vague sense. Conversion, scripturally, means simply two things:

1. “I have quit the wrong.”
2. “I have taken hold of the right”

No man is scripturally converted until he throws down the wrong and walks off from the wrong, and walks up to the right and espouses the cause of the right. Religion is a two-fold principle, or rather it is a principle that enables man to discern the right and to do the right, to discern the wrong and to make him hate the wrong. There are two elements in every pious life:

1. Negative goodness.
2. Positive righteousness.

Negative goodness is not religion. If negative goodness was religion, then one of these lamp posts out here would be the best Christian in town; it never cursed, nor swore, nor drank a drop since it was made; it never did anything wrong. If negative goodness is religion, then a stock, or stone, or mountain, would be the best specimen of Christian this world has. Negative goodness is, perhaps, one of the halves of religion; but genuine religion, Christly religion, means not only that a man is negatively good, but that he is positively righteous.

There is no power in a negative position, or in being negative. Christ Jesus saw this when he told his preachers to go forth and affirm and preach the gospel, not go to denying the denials of infidelity. I never uttered a sentence in my life to prove that the Bible was true. I never spent five minutes in my life trying to prove there was a hell. I never spent fifteen seconds in the pulpit in my life trying to prove there is a God. Nobody but a fool needs such argument. A man told me once, "I don't believe there is a God. I don't believe I am anything but mortal." Said I, "If I was you I would get me a little more hair and a tail and be a sure enough dog." I believe I would.

### **NO POWER IN NEGATION**

There is, as I said, no power in a negative force, and none in a negative position of any sort. We are not sent forth to deny anything that anybody says, but we are sent forth to affirm something. An aggressive Christianity is always affirmative. I am sorry for the preacher that has backslidden far enough to try to prove in his sermon that there is a God. I am sorry for the preacher that has got so low down in his theology that he is trying to establish the fact that there is a hell sure enough. I know of men trying to establish the fact that there is no hell. A gentleman said to me the other day that the fact was nearly established. I said to him, "When did you start your exploring party down there, and when will they return to report?"

He said he hadn't started anybody and he wasn't looking for them to return. Said I, "How are you going to prove anything then?" And I want to tell you this much: The assertions of the word of God on all these questions stand unshaken to-day, and a little child of three years old in this city knows just as much about hell as any living scientist I suppose some of the dead ones know more about it. There's many a fellow that has written hell out of his theology here, but he won't be in Hell fifteen seconds till he will jump and say, "My Lord! What a mistake I made in my theology. There is one, sure enough."

Bob Ingersoll was speaking on one occasion — I have got a good deal of respect for Bob Ingersoll — a great deal more respect than I have for a great many members of the church in this town, a great deal.

When Bob says he doesn't believe the Bible and don't pay any attention to its precepts. They say they believe it, but do just like Bob, you see. I can't stand that. And it isn't theoretical infidelity that is cursing this country; it is practical infidelity; that's the sort.

### **AN INGERSOLL STORY**

Well, Ingersoll was lecturing — I believe it was in Milwaukee — and in his lecture he came to this assertion, and while he lectured there were standing up in the corner of the platform three or four drunken men, standing there talking in an undertone. That crowd felt like they ought to take the amen corners on Bob; and all I want to know about any fellow is who takes the amen corners on him; and when you find Bob preaching you will find the amen corners filled with old red-nosed drunkards and other vagabonds of the town; they have rushed up and taken the amen corners on him.

And while Bob was lecturing, when he reached the assertion, "There is no hell, and I can prove it to any reasonable man," he got the attention at that word, of course.

They were interested at this point, and one of them straightened himself up, and staggered up to Bob and put his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Can you, Bob?" He said, "Yes, I can."

"Well," the fellow says, "do it, Bob; and make it mighty strong, for," he says, "I tell you that nine tenths of us poor fellows in Milwaukee are depending on how you make that thing."

### **THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE**

So we say we never need try to prove anything that the Bible asserts. We are to preach the word to the people and the Bible will take care of itself. The Bible was the guide of my mother. It was the stay of my father's life; it was a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path, and he bequeathed it to me as his richest gift to his wayward boy; and I say to you to-night: take all other things from me and my home, but leave me my Bible.

The precious book I'd rather have  
Than all the golden gems  
That e'er in monarchs' coffers shone  
Or on their diadems.

And were the seas one Chrysolite,  
This earth a golden ball,  
And gems were all the stars of night,  
This book were worth them all.

Ah, no, the soul ne'er found relief  
In glittering hoards of wealth;  
Gems dazzle not the eye of grief;  
Gold cannot purchase health.

But here's a blessed balm  
For every human woe,  
And they that seek that book in tears,  
Their tears shall cease to flow.

Bless God for the Bible, which is the guide of my life and the inspiration of my soul.

### **THE FORCE OF POSITIVISM**

We said a moment ago that it's positive and negative features — these two combined — give it force and power — give Christian life force and power. There is no power in electricity until you bring the two forces, positive and negative, together. You see that negative electricity gathering about the trunk of this old oak tree? That tree has withstood a thousand storms, and now we see this negative electricity climbing up its body and settling in its foliage; and now the positive electricity passes over it in the cloud, and negative strikes positive, and the two forces come together in the top of this old oak tree, and it comes with a crash and splits that oak tree from its topmost twig to the last bottom of its roots. There's power.

There's omnipotence. And so in the life of every good man who is negatively good and positively righteous. Look at George Whitfield with his whole nature charged with negative goodness and his life full of positive righteousness. We see him going out to the moor fields of London at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning with 10,000 lanterns blazing all around him. George Whitfield preaches the gospel, and before daylight and sun-up he has a thousand penitents and a thousand converts and does more before breakfast in the morning than all the pulpits in London did the year round. That looks like business.

### **LAZY GOODY-GOODY**

Negative goodness! The Lord knows I have a contempt for the good-goody members of the Church. Old Brother Goody-Goody and Old Sister Goody-Goody just goody-goody and so good they are good for nothing. Haven't you seen 'em?

I believe in doing good. I like goodness. I despise every wicked act that a man can do. But I tell you this: I have had members, as a pastor, who would work and do their level best, and every three or four months they would get drunk in spite of everything I could do. When they were sober, they went up to their eyes in religion and in work and righteousness, and I tell you I hate this thing you call drunkenness, and no man hates it more than I do, but I had rather have a member of the Church who would get drunk every three or four months, but would work when he is sober and do his level best, than one of these sober fellows that ain't any account anyhow, that might just as well be drunk or just as well be dead.

God pity these lazy, shiftless kinds of fellows. All they want in God's world is somewhere to sit down and somewhere to spit. Spitting room is a big thing with lazy men. Now recollect, if anybody says they don't believe in laughing in church, that you are in a music hall tonight. You can just eat your patchin' on that Hoe. There ain't any harm in laughing here.

Teaching that we must quit the wrong —

**“That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we must live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world,”**

teaching me this fact, and the first lesson Christ ever taught man here was this: “You are a sinner; you are a wrongdoer; you ought to cease to do evil; you ought to forsake your sins.”

### **CROSSING THE RIVER OF RESOLUTION**

And I will say right here at this point, I could never lay any claim to the salvation of Jesus Christ until I bundled all my sins up in one common bundle and threw them all down and walked over the river of Resolution, and then turned round and set fire to the bridge and stood and watched till the last expiring spark dropped into the water; and then I turned my back on sin and said “I am in now for the conversion or nothing,” and I hadn't got fifteen steps from the bank of that river till I was in the arms of God, a saved man, and I say to you to-night — you men of the Church who say, “I can't live without sin,” that no man ever found God and no man was ever converted until he quit his sins. That's all there is about it. When I stand up and preach against sin and sinners, the Church hollers, “Lay on MacDuff! Give it to him. He ought to have it” But when I preach at the Church and say, “You men who profess to be Christians, you are living in sin,” they say, “Oh, he's one of these sanctificationists, and he's putting on airs.” You want me to give it to these old sinners, but let you alone. Ah, me! Brother! If God Almighty expects these sinners to quit sin, what does he expect of you who profess to love him, who profess to be Christians! That's the way to talk it.

### **A BLAST AT PROGRESSIVE EUCHRE**

Cease to do evil and learn to do well. I want to say here in my place to-night that I profess to know a few things along this line, and propose to say them to that member of the Church that dances and attends theaters and plays progressive euchre — and that's the best named game I ever heard — progressive euchre! Progressive euchre double-quick to Hell right along. And I say another thing. There is no progressive euchre player in this house that ought not to be indicted for violating the laws of Missouri and be put in one of the jails of this county. How do you like that? It is just gambling scientifically, magnificently, gloriously, socially, and so forth. That's what it is. And I'll tell you, in our State we can indict a man and put him in the penitentiary for playing progressive euchre with his neighbors, any time, and I want to see the day come when if Christians haven't got faith enough in the Lord Jesus Christ and their profession to bind them to decency and right that the law will help us to make our members decent. I do. I do, sure

### **EUCHRE PLAYERS STILL UNSAVED**

And the man who is running these things, I'll tell you the truth, brethren, that man never was converted; that man never has repented; that man is still in the bonds of iniquity and the gall of bitterness. You ask me why! Well, I got religion fourteen years ago last August — I was right sure there — and if it did not knock that card-playing, theater-going system out of me right there!

And I never got a symptom of it since; and whenever the day comes in my religions experience when I want to play cards, and when I want to drink whisky, and when I want to attend theaters, I want to drop down on my knees and tell the Lord, "My religion is played out, sure. I never felt this symptom since I was converted, and now, Lord, like most Methodists, my religion has left me and give it back to me again." That's the way I talk, and all I can say of you Presbyterians and Christians and Baptists that are not on that line is, you never had any, because you can't lose yours, you know. When our members go to the devil we say "they have lost their religion," and when your members go to the devil you say "they never had any." Well, it don't make any difference which way it is, the devil has got them sure.

**"Teaching us that we must cease to do evil and learn to do well."**

This is the Christian truth that teaches me that I must deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and I must live soberly as to myself, righteously toward my neighbor, godly toward Him unto whom I owe so much.

Now, here are three positive attitudes of the Christian. He is a sober-minded man in his relations toward all the world around him. I like one of these sober-minded men that takes a particular view of everything, and goes for the long run all the time, and cares nothing for counting the present results, but is looking to the great long run. I like one of these sober-minded men. He is the same every day, and the same under all circumstances and the same everywhere; he is just as good in New York as he is in St. Louis.

### **CAUSE FOR DIVORCE**

There is many a fellow that is a good Christian in St. Louis, but if he were to wear an indicator when he went to New York, when he got back his wife would quit him, is my candid judgment. He is just as sober and pious here in church and in this community as he can be, but let him go on a fishing trip, and he'll carry a quart of liquor for every day he's going to be out. I like a religion that keeps me as good off of my knees as I am on my knees; just as good on the outside as I am on the inside; just as good in New York as I am at home; just as good anywhere and everywhere and forever, as my promises and my vows demand I should be. I like that sort of Christianity — a sober-minded sort that regulates all my life. I like that this dead-level sort, this straightforward sort; I like that sort of a Christian.

Sober-mindedness. That's the regulating force of every good man's life that makes him step along in an even, smooth way toward the good world. Some people think Heaven is away off yonder, and some think Hell is away down yonder, but I want to tell you that Heaven is on a dead-level with every good man's heart, and I want to tell you the way to Heaven is a dead-level.

Christ dug down the mountains, and filled up the valleys, and the way to Heaven is a dead-level, and the way to Hell is a dead-level, and there is only one road in the moral universe, and one end of that road is Hell, and the other end of the road is Heaven, and it don't matter who you are, but which way are you going? Don't you see? Sober and righteous - a sober-minded man.

## THE REGULATING FORCE OF LIFE

You look at that stationary engine out yonder at the sawmill. You see little governors playing around over the steam-chest, and you see there that saw as it runs into that large log — that sixty-two-inch circular saw runs right into the log, and the little governors let down, and additional steam is thrown against the piston-head, and I see that saw wade right along through the log, and ran out at the other end, and the little governors lift up, and let off the steam, and the saw runs at the same revolution to the minute, whether it is in or out.

There is the Christian man, like Job. Oh, my, he was a sober-minded man. In prosperity, and when adversity came, and the last dollar was swept away from him, Job run in and out that log, and he was running the same revolutions to the minute when he run into infirmity and disease and pain, and as he run right through and came out, running the same revolution to the minute, and he said **“I will trust him though he slay me,”** and when they placed the charge against his character that he had sinned and done wrong, he went right along through that, and came out on the other side, and the Lord God said to him: “Job, take my arm, and walk with me, and I will make your latter days more prosperous than your former days.”

I like a sober-minded man — a man who will do the same thing all the time; not one of those men who will do something during the revival meeting, and who don't recollect that he did anything out of the revival, and one day he will shake your hands and another day he will hardly know you when he meets you on the street. I don't like one of those persimmon-headed sort of fellows: I want a fellow who knows you when he meets you, everywhere, and will do the same thing everywhere, and under all circumstances.

## THE DEMAND FOR DOWNRIGHT HONESTY

Sober-minded! A Christian man ought to be sober-minded, and rest on this one promise — all things are given for good to them that love God — sober-minded as to ourselves and righteous toward our neighbors. I will tell you if there is anything the religion demands of a man, it is that he be downright honest. Honesty! As somebody said, “An honest man is the noblest work of God,” and that is the grandest utterance outside the lid of the Bible.

“An honest man is the noblest work of God.” And when I say an honest man, I don't mean a man simply that pays his debts — some of us ain't honest enough to do that. But I have known men that would walk across town to pay a nickel that they owed, and I never saw a man that would do that, that I would not hide my pocket book from at night. One of those fellows that are so scrupulous he is fixing things to cheat somebody. I am not talking about that class.

I'll tell you what this world needs right now. It needs a larger course of downright honesty; that's it. I will tell you what; the Church of God will never take this world until we get honest. There are too many men in the Church boarding with their wives — there are that — agents for their wives. I want to die the day before my wife appoints me her agent Do you hear that? A man in the Church of God and a prominent character, and that man living in a \$30,000 house and riding around in a \$1,200 turnout, and the poor widow woman whose money he has is walking these streets with scarcely bread to eat.

And if there is a Hell at all, that man will go there as certain as God is just.

### **THE BUSINESS VALUE OF RELIGION**

Honesty! We want in this country, men in the Church of God who will do what they say they will do. That's it. Why, sir, a man's Methodism ain't worth anything to him in this country, and a man's Baptism and his Presbyterianism ain't worth anything to him. You go down to a store tomorrow and want a thousand dollars' worth of goods on credit, and the fellow says, "Can you give me any security?" "No; I am a Methodist"

"O, Lord! You can't run that thing on me here."

And let a Baptist go down there and say, "I'm a Baptist, and I want credit"

"Law, me! If you will come in here and let me show you how these Baptists have gouged me, you would not play yourself as a Baptist"

And so with every denomination. And I tell you her to-night; the Church of God will never do the work he wants her to do until she is honest — honest toward God and honest toward man. I want to see the day come when all the churches in the world will have the character in commercial life that the old Hardshell Church has in Georgia.

Down in Athens, Ga., an old Hardshell walked in one day to a store, and said to the merchant: "I want a couple of hundred dollars' worth of goods this year on credit" The merchant looked at his old hat and jean pants, and he concluded that was not the sort of a man to trust, and he told him he would not give him the goods. The fellow turned and walked out, and the merchant asked a clerk in the store:

"Who is that man!" "That's Mr. So-and-So; he belongs to the Hardshell Church up here."

The merchant went out after him and said: "Friend, come back here. Are you a Hardshell?" He said, "Yes."

"Well," said the merchant, "you can have all you want; you can have all I have here in this store on credit for as long time as you need." And down in Georgia the Hardshells will turn a member out of church for taking the homestead exemption or going into bankruptcy just as quick as they would for stealing — they will that.

### **PAYING ONE HUNDRED CENTS ON THE DOLLAR**

Honesty! I like that. We have collecting laws all over this country, and we have ruined our people; we have made our people dishonest by our laws — that is the truth about it. Our people are made dishonest by our laws. Our law, our Congress, our Legislature, fixes it so that a man can, by a turn of technicalities in law, just wipe out all his debts, and he can compromise with his creditors.

Out in Waco, Tex., last year, there was a merchant there thrown into bankruptcy, and he compromised his debts at a hundred cents in the dollar — just think about that — and paid it, every bit He compromised his debts at a hundred cents in the dollar! He was a fool, wasn't he?

He was a fool. They say in one heathen country they make every holiday a day for a general hand shaking among all enemies, and every fellow pays every dollar he owes in the world. That's a grand holiday ain't it? They are heathens, though, ain't they? They must be heathens if they do that way. Make friends with all my enemies, and pay every dollar I owe every holiday! Nobody but a heathen would do that, would they? Righteously do the right thing; do the right thing.

And I want to say about it, that those bankrupt and homestead laws have been the curse of this country in all ages of it. I want to see the day come — and I beg your pardon for the excession — I want to see the day come when you can sell a man's shirt off of his back to pay his debts. I'd rather die than to be in debt, and have things that other people ought to have. That's the way I look at it.

### **THE SPEAKER'S EXPERIENCE**

You say, “Yes, you are talking mighty big.” Yes, and I have talked little, too, I want you to understand that. The devil bankrupted me for both worlds, and when God converted my soul and I was called into the ministry, I was hundreds of dollars in debt, and I know how a man feels; I know how it cows a man; and I know how I have gone up with \$2.50 at a time to pay a debt and my wife had one dress and I had one suit, and we were living at starvation rates, and my wife doing her own ironing and her own nursing, and I splitting the wood and working and saving every nickel I could to pay my debts, and in spite of that I have heard of fellows saying: “If that fellow Jones would pay his debts I could have more confidence in him,” and if they had put their ears to this side (placing his hand on his head) they could hear the blood drip! Drip! I paid every cent, thank God! A hundred cents on the dollar, and I was just as good a man after I paid as I was before. And thank God that a poor man can be an honest man! Thank God that is true.

### **GOD'S APPRECIATION OF HONESTY**

I'll tell you the sort I find in my Bible — where Obadiah borrowed \$500 from Ahab and died before the money was due. After his death Ahab sued the widow for the debt, and levied on her and her two children for the money. They could levy on children in those days, and they were to be sold in this case to pay the debt.

The mother was in distress, and she hunted up — I had almost said a lawyer, but she never went within a mile of one, God bless you. She hunted up the best old prophet of God on the face of the earth. She stated her case to him and said:

“My husband died owing this money and they have levied on my two children to pay this debt. What most I do?”

The old prophet looked at her and said: “What have you in your house?” The poor woman replied, trembling: “Nothing but a pot of oil, and that is to embalm our bodies with.”

The prophet never said a word about the homestead, but he said: “You go and sell that oil and pay that debt.”

She went home and borrowed vessels and drew enough oil out of the pot to pay the old debt, and she had more oil left afterwards than when she commenced to draw it. That was God Almighty standing by an honest woman, don't you see? I have seen it repeated again and again, and I tell you that God Almighty will take care of honest men, if he has to put the angels on half rations for twelve months.

I was once appointed to certain work in a certain county in a Georgia circuit. The year before the whole country was blighted with drought. The people had not made a bale of cotton to twenty acres, when they ought to have made a bale to every two acres. Corn was not a paying crop, and merchants were pressing their claims.

I commenced preaching righteousness. I said, “I know your soil has been parched by the drought, I know your crops are failures; I know that you are poor, but” I continued, “listen at me. If the sheriff comes on you and takes your house and your stock, and your all, let him take them, and then walk out with your wife and children, bareheaded and barefooted, so that you can say, ‘we are homeless and breadless, but my integrity is as unstained as the character of God.’”

Oh, for an unstained character! That is what we want in this country. An honest man! I tell you there are too many men in this country who have widows' and orphans' legacies in their pockets, and I am sorry to say, too many of that sort have broken into the churches of this country, and every dollar of that money that you keep in your pocket as a preacher, and in your treasury as a church, the devil will make you pay it back with compound interest. He well knows that that is his money, and he does not loan his money without interest, and big interest at that.

## **BUSINESS INTEGRITY**

Righteously. Righteous men. I like righteous men. Tom Moore, the poet, was righteous in this sense. They asked him on his dying pillow, “Are there any of your manuscripts that you have changed or altered?” He said “No; I never wrote a line in my life that I would now wipe out with my little finger.”

You are a merchant. Can you say on your dying pillow, “I never performed a deed I would not wipe out with my little finger?”

Samuel, the prophet, was a righteous man, and when he walked out to his burial place, all Israel gathered around him, and the clear voice of the old prophet rang out and he asked these questions: “Whom have I cheated?” “Whom have I defrauded?” “Of whom have I received a bribe of money to blind my eyes?” And all Israel echoed back, “No one.” Oh, that was a grand victory.

But brethren, the man who does not recognize his obligations to God is but half a man at best. I have my relations toward my family, and my relations toward my country, and my relations toward my God. I will meet the demands of my children and my home. I will meet the demands of my country. I will meet the demands of the God that made me and them. I am good for all worlds.

A godly man is one that does everything with reference to the great eye of God that is looking down upon him; a man that is godly in his life and character, and that does right toward the God that made him. Where do we find examples of godly men? Paul, the author of this text, was a godly man. He lived for God, and counted all things as lost that he might please God. In his dying moments he sat in his dark dungeon and wrote in his last letter to Timothy:

**“The time of my departure is at hand.”**

Oh, what a thought! Paul meant to say to him: “I shall have a cold supper to-night and a cold breakfast in the morning; I shall sleep on a hard bed to-night, but I shall take dinner in Heaven to-morrow with God and the angels.” He talked about his departure as a school boy talks of leaving school for home, and when his head was severed from his body God stooped down, picked up that bloody head and placed a crown of everlasting life upon it He was a godly man and God will take care of that sort of man, living or dying.

### **A NOBLE ENDING**

Just such a man as this died in our State some months ago, and when his large family of Christian boys and girls stood around him, he struggled for breath in the last extremities of life. Just as his moments were drawing to a close he seemed restless and wanted to speak. His children's attention was attracted by his looks and they said, “Father, is there any request you wish to make? If so tell us what it is.”

He caught his breath and said, “Bring” — but breaking down he could not utter another word. His children gathered close around him and said, “Oh father, do not die without telling us what you want.”

Again he said, “Bring” — and could not utter another word. The children bent over him and said, “Father, do not die without telling us what you want.” Presently his system relaxed in death, and his lips moved freely as he said:

Bring forth the royal diadem.  
And crown him Lord of all.

Then the soul swept out of his body and he never breathed another breath. God help us to live righteously, soberly and godly in this world, and to look forward with blessed hope to the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. At times within the past ten years I have thought of going back to the practice of law, and of accumulating a fortune, that my family might be provided for, and of preaching the gospel in after life; but with the blessed hope of God before me I continued right on.

My eyes were on something better, grander and nobler. When kind friends in Nashville said: "Here is a \$10,000 home and thousands in bonds if you will make your home in our midst," I replied: "No, in our own quiet little cottage my wife and children and myself love God and are working for Heaven's glory. Excuse me; I love you just as much as if I accepted it." Then my wife said to me, "Husband, I am prouder of you for that than for any act in your history."

### **HIGHER AIMS**

And I want to say to this congregation that I am getting higher and higher. I sympathize a good deal with the eaglet caged up yonder. Now a kind friend, pitying its drooping condition, opens the cage door and lets it out. I see it leave its cage and turn its eye to the sun and to the mountain-tops. Its ruffled feathers begin to smooth down and it raises its wings and shakes them for a moment. I see it fly up into the air and poise itself on its wings. It looks back toward the cage and utters a scream, as much as to say, "Farewell cage; farewell imprisonment and weary hours!"

I see it fly higher and higher, until at last it poises on its wings just in sight and I hear it scream again. It seems to say, "Farewell earth and imprisonment and cage and dreary days." Higher and higher it goes, poises itself, flies off and alights on the mountain top, free as air. Brethren, the soul of man, that has been ruffled by ten thousand cares, some of these days will look toward that blessed hope of God, plume its wings and fly upward. And the higher we go, earth shall hear our voices, growing the fainter, saying, "Farewell cares, imprisonment and earth!"

Higher and higher we shall go until at last we fly off in a bee-line for the other world. We shall go up until there is nothing in the way. That is what a bee-line means. The bee, after passing from flower to flower and filling its little honey cell, begins to circle up and up and up, until it gets above the highest tree top. Then it strikes a bee-line for its home.

Brethren, let us get above worldly care and sin and temptation, and let us strike a bee-line for that home beyond where sin and suffering are felt no more. May God bless you all, and may you ponder over these words in the spirit in which they have been uttered. If you do not like anything that has been said, and if you come and apologize, I will forgive you, for I never bear malice to anybody in this world.

~ end of sermon 3 ~

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