

Restoration

Genesis 35.

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The words "Arise, go up to Bethel" contain a great practical truth to which we desire to call the reader's attention.

It has been well remarked by some one that "God, in His dealings with us, always keeps us up to the original terms." This is true; but some may not exactly understand it. It may, perhaps, savour of the legal element. To speak of God as keeping us up to certain terms may seem to militate against that free grace in which we stand, and which has reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Many, we are aware, have a kind of horror of everything bordering, in the most remote way, upon the legal system; and we may say we sympathise with such.

At the same time, we must take care not to carry that feeling to such an extent as would lead us to throw overboard aught that is calculated to act in a divine way upon the heart and conscience of the believer. We really want practical truth. There is a vast amount of what is called abstract truth in circulation among us, and we prize it, and would prize it more. We delight in the unfolding of truth in all its departments. But then we must remember that truth is designed to act on hearts and consciences, and that there are hearts and consciences to be acted upon. We must not cry out, "Legal! legal!" whenever some great practical truth falls upon our ears, even though that truth may come before us clothed in a garb which at first sight seems strange.

We are called to "suffer the word of exhortation" — to listen to wholesome words — to apply our hearts diligently to everything tending to promote practical godliness and personal holiness. We know that the pure and precious doctrines of grace — those doctrines which find their living centre in the person of Christ, and their eternal foundation in His work — are the means which the Holy Ghost uses to promote holiness in the life of the Christian; but we know also that those doctrines may be held in theory, and professed with the lips, while the heart has never felt their power, and the life never exhibited their moulding influence.

Yes, we frequently find that the loud and vehement outcry against everything that looks like legality proceeds from those who, though they profess the doctrines of grace, do not realize their sanctifying influence; whereas those who really understand the meaning of grace, who feel its power to mould and fashion, to purify and elevate, are ever ready to welcome the most pungent appeals to the heart and conscience.

But the pious reader may want to know what is meant by the expression quoted above, namely, "God always keeps us up to the original terms." Well, it simply means this, that when God calls us to any special position or path, and we fall short of it, or wander from it, He will recall us to it again and again. And further, when we set out under some special principle of action or standard of devotedness, and swerve from it, or fall below it, He will remind us of it, and bring us back to it. True, He bears with us patiently, and waits on us graciously; but "He always keeps us up to the original terms."

And can we not praise Him for this? Assuredly we can. Could we endure the thought of His allowing us to fall short of His holy standard, or to wander hither and thither without His uttering a word to urge us on or call us back? We trust not. Well, then, if He does speak, what must He say? He must just remind us of "the old terms." Thus it is, and thus has ever been. When Peter was converted at

the lake of Gennesaret he forsook all and followed Jesus, and the last words that fell on his ear from the lips of his risen Lord were, "Follow thou Me." This was simply keeping him to the original terms. The heart of Jesus could not be satisfied with less, and neither should the heart of His servant.

By the lake of Gennesaret, Peter set out to follow Jesus. What then? Years rolled on; Peter had stumbled; he had denied his Lord; he had gone back to his boats and nets. What then? After the Lord's resurrection, as Peter, restored in soul, stood by the side of his loving Lord at the sea of Tiberias, he was called to listen to that one brief, pointed utterance, "Follow Me" — an utterance embracing in its comprehensive grasp all the details of a life of active service and of patient suffering. In a word, Peter was brought back to the original terms — the terms between his soul and Christ. He was brought to learn that the heart of Jesus had undergone no change toward him — that the love of that heart was inextinguishable and unaltered; and, because it was so, it could not tolerate any change in Peter's heart — neither decline nor departure from the original terms.

Now we see the same thing precisely in the history of the patriarch Jacob. Let us just turn to it for a moment. At the close of Gen. 28 we have the record of the original terms between the Lord and Jacob. We shall quote it at length.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Here, then, we have the blessed statement of what the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob undertook to do for Jacob and for his seed — a statement crowned by these memorable words, "*I will not leave thee. until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*" Such are the terms by which God binds Himself to Jacob; which terms, blessed be His name, have been and will be fulfilled to the letter, though earth and hell should interpose to prevent. Jacob's seed shall yet possess the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance, for who shall prevent Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God Almighty, from accomplishing His promise?

Let us now harken to Jacob. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel.... And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace — then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

Thus much as to Bethel and the terms entered into there. God pledged Himself to Jacob; and though Heaven and earth should pass away, that pledge must be maintained in all its integrity. He revealed Himself to that poor lonely one who lay sleeping on his stony pillow; and not only revealed

Himself to him, but linked Himself with him in a bond which no power of earth or hell can ever dissolve.

And what of Jacob? Why, he dedicated himself to God, and vowed that the spot where he had enjoyed such a revelation and darkened to such exceeding great and precious promises, should be God's house. All this was deliberately uttered before the Lord, and solemnly recorded by Him; and then Jacob went on his journey. Years passed — twenty long and eventful years — years of trial and exercise, during which Jacob experienced many ups and downs, changes, and varied trials; but the God of Bethel watched over His poor servant, and appeared unto him in the midst of his pressure, and said unto him, "I am the God of Bethel, *where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me*: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred."

God had not forgotten the original terms, neither would He let His servant forget them. Is this legality? Nay; it is the exhibition of divine love and faithfulness. God loved Jacob, and He would not suffer him to stop short of the old standard. He jealously watched over the state of His servant's heart; and, lest it should by any means remain below the Bethel mark, He gently reminds him by those touching and significant words, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow." This was the sweet expression of God's unchanging love, and of the fact that He counted on Jacob's remembrance of Bethel scenes.

How amazing that the High and Mighty One, who inhabiteth eternity, should so value the love and remembrance of a poor worm of the earth! Yet so it is, and we ought to bear it more in mind. Alas, we forget it! We are ready enough to take mercies and blessings from the hand of God, and most surely He is ready enough to bestow them.

But then we ought to remember that He looks for the loving devotion of our hearts to Him; and if we, in the freshness and ardour of other days, set out to follow Christ, give up all for Him, can we suppose for a moment that He could coldly and indifferently forego His claim upon our heart's affections? Should we like Him to do so? Could we endure the thought of its being a matter of indifference to Him whether we loved Him or not? God forbid! Yea, it should be the joy of our hearts to think that our blessed Lord seeks the loving devotion of our souls to Him; that He will not be satisfied without it; that when we wander hither and thither, He calls us back to Himself, in His own gentle, gracious, touching way.

When, weary of His rich repast,
I've sought, alas, to rove;
He has recalled His faithless guest,
And showed His banner, Love.

Yes, His banner ever floats, bearing its own inscription upon it to win back our vagrant hearts, and remind us of the original terms. He says to us, in one way or another, as He said to Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow." Thus he deals with us, in the midst of all our wanderings, our haltings, and our stumblings. He makes us to know, that as we cannot do without His love, so neither can He do without ours. It is truly wonderful; yet so it is. He will keep the soul up to the old terms. Harken to those touching appeals of the Spirit of Christ to His saints in other days: "Thou hast *left thy first love*", - "Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and *do thy first works*" (Rev. 2); "Call to remembrance *the former times*" (Heb. 10: 32); "Where is the blessedness ye spake of?" (Gal. 4: 15)

What is all this but calling His people back to the old point from which they had declined? It may be said, they ought not to have needed this. No doubt; yet they did need it; and because they needed it, Jesus did it. It may be said, further, that tried love is better than first love. Granted; but do we not find, as a matter of fact in our spiritual history, that upon our first setting out to follow Jesus there is a simplicity, an earnestness, a freshness, fervour and depth of devotion, which, from various reasons, we fail to keep up? We become cold and careless; the world gets in upon us and eats up our spirituality; nature gains the upper hand, in one way or another, and deadens our spiritual sensibility, damps our ardour, and dims our vision.

Is the reader conscious of anything like this? If so, would it not be a peculiar mercy if at this very moment he were called back to the old terms? Doubtless. Well, then, let him be assured that the heart of Jesus is waiting and ready. His love is unchanging; and not only so, but He would remind you that He cannot be satisfied without a true response from you. Wherefore, beloved friend, whatever has drawn you away from the measure of your earliest dedication to Him, let your heart now spring up and get back at once to Him. Do not hesitate. Linger not. Cast yourself at the feet of your loving Lord — tell Him all — and let your heart fully turn to Him, and let it be only for Him.

This is the secret spring of all true service. If Christ has not the love of your heart, He does not want the labour of your hands. He does not say, "Son, give Me thy money, thy time, thy talents, thine energies, thy pen, thy tongue, thy head." All these are unavailing, unsatisfying to Him. What He says to you is, "My son, give Me thy *heart*." Where the heart is given to Jesus, all will come right. Out of the heart come all the issues of life; and if only Christ have His right place in the heart, the work and the ways, the walk and the character, will be all right.

But we must return to Jacob, and see further how our subject is illustrated in his fruitful history. At the close of Genesis 38 we find him settling down at Shechem, where he gets into all sorts of trouble and confusion. His house is dishonoured, and his sons in avenging the dishonour endanger his life. All this Jacob feels keenly, and he says to his sons Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me . . . among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house."

All this was most deplorable; but it does not appear to have once occurred to Jacob that he was in a wrong place. The defilement and confusion of Shechem failed to open his eyes to the fact that he was not up to the old terms. How often is this the case! We fall short of the divine standard in our practical ways; we fail in walking up to the height of the divine revelation; and although the varied fruits of our failure are produced on every side, yet our vision is so dimmed by the atmosphere around us, and our spiritual sensibilities so blunted by our associations that we do not discern how low we are, and how very far short of the proper mark.

However, in Jacob's case we see the divine principle again and again illustrated. "And God said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up *to Bethel*, and *dwell there*; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."

Note this. We have here a most exquisite feature in the divine method of dealing with souls. There is not one word said about Shechem, its pollutions and its confusions. There is not a word of reproof for having settled down there. Such is not God's way. He employs a far more excellent mode. Had we been dealing with Jacob we should have come down upon him with a heavy hand, and read him a severe lecture about his folly in settling at Shechem, and about his personal and domestic habits and condition. But oh, how well it is that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways like ours!

Instead of saying to Jacob, "Why have you settled down in Shechem?" He simply says, "Arise, go up to Bethel"; and the very sound of the word sent a flood of light into Jacob's soul by which he was enabled to judge himself and his surroundings. "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us *arise, and go up to Bethel*; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

This was, assuredly, getting back to the original terms. It was the restoring of a soul and a leading in the paths of righteousness. Jacob felt that he could not bring false gods and defiled garments to Bethel: such things might pass at Shechem, but they would never do for Bethel. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.... So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

"EL-beth-EL" Precious title, which had God for its Alpha and its Omega! At Shechem, Jacob called his altar "El-elohe-Israel," That is, "God, the God of Israel"; but at Bethel, the true standpoint, he called his altar "El-beth-el," that is God-the house of God. This was true restoration. Jacob was brought back, after all his wanderings, to the very point from which he had started. Nothing less than this could ever satisfy God in reference to His servant. He could wait patiently on him — bear with him — minister to him — care for him — look after him; but He never could rest satisfied with anything short of this — "Arise, go up to Bethel."

Christian reader, pause here, we want to ask you a question. Are you conscious of having wandered from Jesus? Has your heart declined, and grown cold? Have you lost the freshness and ardour which once marked the tone of your soul? Have you allowed the world to get in upon you? Have you, in the moral condition of your soul, got down into Shechem? Has your heart gone after idols, and have your garments become defiled? If so, let us remind you of this, that *the Lord wants you back to Himself* Yes, this is what He wants; and He wants it now. He says to you at this moment, "Arise, go up to Bethel."

You will never be happy, you will never be right, until you yield a full response to this blessed and soul-stirring call. O yield it now, we beseech you. Rise up, and fling aside every weight and every hindrance; put away the idols and change your garments, and get back to the feet of your Lord, who loves you with a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown; and who cannot be satisfied until He has you with Himself, according to the original terms. Say not this is legal; it is nothing of the sort. It is the love of Jesus — His deep, glowing, earnest love — love which is jealous of every rival affection — love which gives the whole heart, and must have a whole heart in return. May God the Holy Ghost bring back every wandering heart to the true standard! May He visit with fresh power every soul that has gone down to Shechem, and give no rest until a full response has been yielded to the call, "*Arise, go up to Bethel.*"

John 21: 1-19

A careful study of these verses will enable us to trace in them three distinct kinds of restoration, namely, restoration of conscience, restoration of heart, and restoration of position.

1. The first of these, restoration of conscience, is of all-importance. It would be utterly impossible to overestimate the value of a sound, clear, uncondemning conscience. A Christian cannot get on if there is a single soil on his conscience. He must walk before God with a pure conscience — a conscience without stain or sting. Precious treasure! May my reader ever possess it! but in each it must

be a restoration to the original terms.

It is very obvious that Peter possessed it in the touching scene "at the sea of Tiberias." And yet he had fallen — shamefully, grievously fallen. He had denied his Lord with an oath; but he was restored. One look from Jesus had broken up the deep fountains of his heart, and drawn forth floods of bitter tears. And yet it was not his tears, but the love that drew them forth, which formed the ground of his thorough restoration of conscience. It was the changeless and everlasting love of the heart of Jesus — the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus — and the all-prevailing power of the advocacy of Jesus, that imparted to Peter's conscience the boldness and liberty so strikingly and beautifully exhibited on the memorable occasion before us.

The risen Saviour is seen in these closing chapters of John's Gospel watching over His poor, feeble, erring disciples — hovering about their path — presenting Himself in various ways before them — taking occasion from their very necessities to make Himself known in perfect grace to their hearts. Was there a tear to be dried, a difficulty to be solved, a fear to be hushed, a bereaved heart to be soothed, an unbelieving mind to be corrected? Jesus was present, in all the fullness and variety of His grace, to meet all these things.

So also when, under the guidance of the ever forward Peter, they had gone forth to spend a night in fruitless toil, Jesus had His eye upon them. He knew all about the darkness, and the toil, and the empty net; and there He was on the shore to prepare a dinner for them. Yes, the self-same Jesus who had died on the cross to put away their sins, now stood on the shore to restore them from their wanderings, gather them round Himself, and minister to all their need. "Have ye any meat?" developed the fruitlessness of their night's toil. "Come and dine" was the touching expression of the tender, thoughtful, all-providing love of the risen Saviour.

But let us note particularly the evidences of a thoroughly restored conscience as exhibited by Simon Peter. "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea." He could not wait for the ships or for his fellow-disciples, so eager was he to get to the feet of his risen Lord.

In place of saying to John or to the others, "You know how shamefully I have fallen; and although I have since then seen the Lord, and heard Him speak peace to my soul, yet I think it more becoming in one that has so fallen to keep back; do you therefore go first and meet the blessed One, and I shall follow after." In place of aught in this style, he flings himself boldly into the sea — as much as to say, "I must be the very first to get to my risen Saviour; none has such a claim on Him as poor, stumbling, failing Peter."

Now, here was a perfectly restored conscience — a conscience basking in the sunlight of unchanging love; and is not this the true, original terms for every Christian? Peter's confidence in Christ was unclouded, and this, we may boldly affirm, was grateful to the heart of Jesus. Love likes to be trusted. Let us ever remember this. No one need imagine that he is honouring Jesus by standing afar off on the plea of unworthiness; and yet it is very hard for one who has fallen, or backslidden, to recover his confidence in the love of Christ. Such a one can see clearly that a sinner is welcome to Jesus, no matter how great or manifold his sins may have been; but then, he thinks, the case of a backsliding, or stumbling, Christian is entirely different.

Should these lines be scanned by one who has backslidden, or fallen, we would press upon him most earnestly the importance of immediate return to Jesus. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." What is the response to this pathetic appeal? "Behold, we come *unto Thee*; for

Thou art the Lord our God." "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return *unto Me*" (Jer. 3: 22; Jer. 4: 1). The love of the heart of Jesus knows no change. We change; but He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"; and He delights to be trusted. The confidence of Peter's heart was precious to the heart of Christ. No doubt it is sad to fall, to err, to backslide; but it is sadder still, when we have done so, to distrust the love of Jesus, or His gracious readiness to take us to His bosom again.

Beloved reader, have you fallen? Have you erred? Have you backslidden? Have you lost the sweet sense of divine favour, the happy consciousness of acceptance with God? If so, what are you to do? Simply this — "Return." This is God's own special word to the backslider. Return in full confession, in self-judgement, and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. Do not, we beseech you, keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you.

You have sinned, you have failed, you have turned aside; and now, it may be, you are afraid or ashamed to turn your eyes toward the One whom you have grieved, or dishonoured. Satan too is suggesting the darkest thoughts; for he would fain keep you at a chilling distance from that precious Saviour who loves you with an everlasting love.

But you have only to fix your gaze upon the blood, the advocacy, the heart of Jesus, to get a triumphant answer to all the enemy's terrible suggestions, and to all the infidel reasonings of your own heart. Do not, therefore, go on another hour without seeking to get a thorough settlement of the question between your soul and Christ. Remember, "His is an unchanging love, free and faithful, strong as death." Remember, also, His own words, "Return, ye backsliding children" — "Return *to Me*." Christ, and He alone, is the centre and circumference of all the terms to which our souls are bound. And, finally, remember that Jesus loves to be trusted.

2. But the heart has to be restored as well as the conscience. Let this not be forgotten. It often happens, in the history of souls, that though the conscience may be perfectly clear as to certain *acts* which we have done, yet the *roots* from whence those acts have sprung have not been reached. The acts appear on the surface of daily life, but the roots are hidden down deep in the heart, unknown, it may be, to ourselves and others, but thoroughly exposed to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.

Now, these roots must be reached, exposed, and judged, ere the heart is in a right condition in the sight of God. Look at Abraham. He started on his course with a certain root in his heart, a root of unbelieving reserve in reference to Sarah. This thing led him astray when he went down to Egypt; and although his conscience was restored, and he got back to his altar at Bethel, yet the root was not reached for years afterwards, as seen in the affair of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

All this is deeply practical, and most solemn. It finds its illustration in Peter as well as in Abraham. But now mark the exquisitely delicate way in which our blessed Lord proceeds to reach the roots in the heart of His dear and honoured servant. "So when they had dined." Not till then. There was no allusion to the past, nothing that might cause a chill to the heart, or bring a cloud over the spirit, while a restored conscience was feasting in company with a love that knows no change. This is a fine moral trait. It characterises the dealings of God with all His saints. The conscience is set at rest in the presence of infinite and everlasting love.

But there must be the deeper work of reaching the root of things in the heart. When Simon Peter, in the full confidence of a restored conscience, flung himself at the feet of His risen Lord, he was called to listen to that gracious invitation, "Come and dine." But "when they had dined," Jesus, as it were, takes Peter apart, in order to let in upon his soul the light of truth, so that by it he might discern the root from whence all his failure had sprung. That root was self-confidence, which had led him to place

himself in advance of his fellow-disciples, and say, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will not I."

This root had to be exposed, and therefore, "When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" This was a pointed and pungent question, and it went right to the very bottom of Peter's heart. Three times Peter had denied his Lord, and three times his Lord now challenges the heart of Peter — *for the roots must be reached if any permanent good is to be done*. It will not do merely to have the conscience purged from the effects which have been produced in practical life; there must also be the moral judgement of that which produced them. This is not sufficiently understood and attended to, and hence it is that again and again the roots spring up and bear forth their fruit with increasing power, thus cutting out for us the most bitter and sorrowful work, which might all be avoided if the roots of things were thoroughly judged and kept under judgement.

Christian reader, our object is entirely practical. Let us therefore exhort one another to judge our roots, whatever they may be. Do we know our roots? Doubtless it is hard, very hard, to know them. They are deep and manifold: pride, personal vanity, covetousness, irritability, ambition — these are some of the roots of character, the motive springs of action, over which a rigid censorship must ever be exercised. We must let nature know that the eye of self-judgement is continually upon it. We have to carry on the struggle without cessation. We may have to lament over occasional failure; but we must maintain the struggle, for struggle bespeaks *life*. We must remember that the original terms are that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. May God the Holy Ghost strengthen us for this vigilance against the flesh!

3. We shall close with a brief reference to restoration as bearing upon the soul's position, or path. The conscience being thoroughly purged, and the heart, with its varied roots, judged, there is moral preparedness for our proper path. The perfect love of Jesus had expelled all fear from Peter's conscience; and his threefold question had opened up the roots in Peter's heart, and now He says to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." And this is exactly the original terms by which our Lord began with Peter as His disciple. It was then also, "Follow Me."

Here, then, we have in two words the path of the servant of Christ — "Follow *Me*." The Lord had just given Peter the sweetest pledges of His love and confidence. He had, notwithstanding all past failure, entrusted him with the care of all that was dear to His loving heart in this world, even the lambs and sheep of His flock. He had said to him, "If you have affection for Me, feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep"; and now, in one brief but comprehensive utterance, He opens before him his proper path — "Follow Me." This is enough. It includes all besides.

If we want to follow Jesus, we must keep the eye continually upon Him; we must mark His footprints and tread therein. Yes, mark them, and walk in them; and when tempted, like Peter, to "turn about," in order to see what this one or that one has to do, or how he does it, we may hear the correcting words, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." This is to be our one grand and all-absorbing business, come what may. A thousand things may arise to distract and hinder. The devil will tempt us to look hither and thither, to look at this one and that one; to imagine we could do better here than there, or there than here; to be occupied with, and imitating, the work of some fellow-servant. All this is met by those pointed words, "Follow Me."

There is immense danger of following in the wake of others, of doing certain things because others do them, or doing things as others do them. All this has to be carefully guarded against. It will be

sure to come to nothing. What we really want is a broken will — the true spirit of a servant that waits on the Master to know His mind. Service does not consist in doing this or that, or running hither and thither; it is simply doing the Master's will, whatever that may be. "They serve who stand and wait."

It is easier to be busy than to be quiet. When Peter was "*young*," he went whither he would; but when he got "*old*," he went whither he would not. What a contrast between the young, restless, ardent, energetic Peter, going whither he would, and the old, matured, subdued, experienced Peter, going whither he would not! What a mercy to have the will broken! — to be able to say from the heart. "*What Thou wilt — as Thou wilt — where Thou wilt — when Thou wilt*" — "not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done"!

"*Follow Me!*" Precious words! May they be engraved on our hearts! Then shall we be steady in our course and effective in our service. We shall not be distracted or unhinged by the thoughts and opinions of men. It may happen that we shall get very few to understand us or to sympathise with us — few to approve or appreciate our work. It matters not. The Master knows all about it. If a master tells one of his servants distinctly to go and do a certain thing, or occupy a certain post, it is his business to go and do that thing, or occupy that post, no matter what his fellow-servants may think. They may tell him that he ought to be somewhere else, or to do something else. A proper servant will heed them not; he knows his master's mind, and has to do his master's work.

Would it were more thus with all the Lord's servants! Would that we all knew more distinctly, and carried out more decidedly, the Master's will respecting us! Peter had his path, and John had his. James had his work, and Paul had his. So it was of old: the Gershonite had his work, and the Merarite had his; and if the one had interfered with the other, the work would not have been done. The tabernacle was carried forward, or set up, by each man doing his own proper work.

Thus it is in this our day. God has varied workmen in His house and in His vineyard; and the original terms of service are that the Holy Spirit divideth to every one as *He* will. He has quarrymen, stone-squarers, masons, and builders. Are all quarrymen? Surely not. But each has his work to do, and the building is carried forward by each one doing his own appointed work. Should a quarryman despise a builder, or a builder look down with contempt upon a quarryman? Assuredly not. The Master wants them both; and whenever the one would interfere with the other (as, alas, we are apt to do), the faithful correcting word falls on the ear, "*What is that to thee, Follow thou ME.*"