

I have on several occasions heard preachers say the text had been changed. Usually it was an Evangelist and sometimes a reason was given and sometimes not. It has always seemed to me there was no necessity for telling the people even though there seemed a good reason for a change.

Sometimes there is a good reason for a change in the text and theme. This may be due to some change in the congregation that an alert speaker realizes at the last moment. I do not remember that I ever changed my text and theme in the presence of the congregation but once and I did not know at the time the reason for the change. That leads me to say that the Spirit of God does not always indicate the why of His will. Certainly He does not always indicate His will by any outward sign. I do not know that He ever speaks to us in the English language. He may bring to mind some well known passage that is English. I do not know that the Spirit of God in dealing with our spirit needs any language. He moves upon our spirit making us dissatisfied and uneasy and inclining our hearts to desire the thing that is in His mind for us. So I changed my text and theme in the presence of an important congregation without knowing why I was moved to do this. I wish I had written down my every reaction and emotion in this experience for it might have helped me on subsequent occasions to have more quickly realized the mind of God. We are often like little Samuel of old who did not know the voice of God.

I was invited to fill the pulpit of an important church for the Sunday morning service. It was a much larger congregation than I was accustomed to addressing. I felt honored and, understandably, I desired to do my best and give the people a worth while service. So I gave careful attention to my preparation. Sometime before in my Bible study I had come to a passage that interested me and I had used it with my own people. I went back to this and thought through it again.

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However I was not satisfied and I worked and reworked the subject till I knew it was as good as I could do. Still I did not feel right about it. It did not occur to me that I ought to try some other subject. I knew no reason why I should not use the passage of scripture. I wanted to make my discourse on that passage a masterpiece.

I made my way down to the city on Saturday afternoon and spent the night with a friend. I was not satisfied with the sermon but we had a pleasant evening and something after ten O'Clock I retired to my room. I thought over the service for the next morning and asked God's help and lay down but that sermon did not make a good bedfellow and I lay awake. Presently an old sort of grandmother clock on the mantel I had not noticed broke into the distressed situation with a most outlandish sort of banging to notify all the people in that quarter of town that it was eleven O'Clock. I was not used to having that sort of clock in my bedroom and I knew I was faced with the new hazzard of staying awake all night. I began to realize I was not in line for any new glory in that town. However I would not hesitate to go beyond the call of duty and get to sleep before the real uproar of the night but it was to no avail. "Bang". The old clock was notifying me that another quarter or half had passed. I knew there was no use so I just waited till the twelve O'Clock disturbance was over. In the mean time I would save the situation by thinking through that sermon again. I used the time but it did no good. When the midnight uproar was over and the dust had settled and the leaves on the trees quit shaking, I said, "Well, that won't happen again tonight". I settled down to sleep but not so. The Lord was giving us a quiet night so that old clock could get in a good nights work. About two I got up and opened the door and took the disturber out in the hall and set it down in the far end and came back in and fell asleep.

We had breakfast and in my room I made my final preparations. I was not satisfied but what could I do? I made my notes and we went down to the church. The service began very nicely but while the

congregation was singing the first hymn I realized I could not preach that sermon. I would have no "liberty" as the old preachers used to say. I changed my text and my scripture reading and decided to give the people what I had given my own the previous Sunday. Surely I prayed to God and refreshed my memory and got my thoughts in order as best I could while a young lady was singing a solo. It was no great sermon and no one commended me in any way and I was not invited to come back, but I had peace in my own heart.

At dinner that day my host, after the blessing, paused in his carving to sit back and have a hearty laugh.

He said, "Let me tell you about the young lady who sang the solo this morning. It is the first time she has sung in several years. The last time she sang she did not do so well but she sang and sat down.

The pastor, who had a stentorian voice and liked to feel that matters had been settled when he spoke and whose very best friends loved to see get in a close place, arose and in a big voice announced his text: "She hath done what she could". Then he came to himself. The congregation was delighted and could not keep from laughing at the preacher's discomfiture. The poor girl sat red faced and embarrassed. My host laughed again as he thought of the preacher's confusion. He said, "This is the first time the lady has sung since that time".

I sat in an astonished silence. "She hath done what she could" was the text of the sermon I had abandoned!

NEVER ALONE

Not only does God help us find our proper place in life but I have learned by experience and by the life history of others that having found your place you do not have to walk alone. The Christian religion is not a mere philosophy, it is a walk with the unseen God. Not only is God an unseen Spirit. He is a present, personal Spirit. He is very near us and is more intimately acquainted with our lives and what we are doing than we are ourselves. "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord". He helps us get our feet in the right road and walks with us. Sometimes our wilful ways hide His face and we walk alone and in the darkness and I have learned by experience if there seems to be no directing it is because we are more set on having our own way than we perhaps realize.

It seem to me there is a Wisdom and a Power back of the believing soul that not only brings him into this world with particular talents but designs him for a particular place. The greatness of God enables Him to be in all the attending circumstances of life and be there in such natural fashion that his presence and guiding hand is not even suspected! Of course a false faith and a false god have nothing to offer in the way of guidance or help in time of trouble but the true God because all power and all good will ^{are} His must be present and willing to help when the conditions, on our part, are proper. Here is the place of quiet in the worst of life's storms.

It seems to me that God's presence and power are ~~more apt to be~~ manifested and realized as such in the days of poverty and adversity than in the days of prosperity. This is an era of unprecedented well-being. Few are in actual need. Insurance cares for sickness. We are supposed to be secured against misfortune by a benevolent state. There is no need for God. We make our prayer or our demands to the proper authorities, and if there is an election coming up, we are heard.

Is it any wonder that in our times there are seldom heard any testimonies to the very present help of God? How strange and out of harmony in this day would this story be, told by a minister as the truth many years ago. He said that he was preaching on a Sabbath morning on God's care for his people. His text was Philippians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." He had such liberty and was so carried away with his theme that he made bold to say that a man with faith in Christ Jesus should be able to put his head in an empty flour barrel and sing the Long Metre Doxology. The week following he was seated one morning at his study table when his wife came in and seizing him by the ear said, "Come with me". She lifted him up out of his chair and led him through the dining room and the kitchen and into the pantry and there was standing an empty flour barrel. "Do you see that?" she said, "Now you stick your head in that barrel and sing the Long Metre Doxology"! The man said, she allowed no hesitation and he had to stick his head in the empty barrel and sing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow". "When I got my head out of the barrel", he said, "I was a chastened and humbled man". He did not say a word and started back to his study. On the way he heard someone calling at the front of the house. He opened the front door and a neighbor was sitting on his horse at the front gate and in front of him on his saddle was fifty pounds of flour! "Since then," the man said, "Philippians 4:19 has been our smokehouse".

My father began his work as a Home missionary. It was not long after the war and everyone was poor. Two little children had come to our house and father took mother and the children with him as he went to fill some of his appointments. He hoped the churches would pay him something but they did not. Coming home on Monday they had no money and there was little or nothing in the house to eat. Mother was troubled and asked what they would do. Father said he did not know but God would provide for them.

When at last they came in

sight of their little home, they saw my grandfather sitting on his horse at the front gate. He had come over to see how "Scotch", as he called my mother was getting on. He was very fond of her. On the pommel of his saddle was a hind quarter of venison. He was as much sent as the ravens that fed Elijah. Sometimes one has to be poor to give God a chance.

Not only does God come to our assistance when we are hard pressed, but he goes before and prepares the way for us and the foundation for things to come. When I went west I left all my family connections and friends behind me. I did not leave any girl friend to look for a return. I did not have such a friend. Before my arrival in El Paso, Texas, my people had arranged for a room for me and engaged for me to get my meals at a boarding house. At my first meal there a young lady of some twenty two years was sitting across the table from me. She was the only child of a widowed mother back in North East Missouri, a University graduate, a school teacher and the only Presbyterian in the whole company who gathered at that place. She had come to make her home at the boarding house only a few days before I arrived. I remember that she had big blue eyes and wavy brown hair and a complexion that was white like milk and without a blemish. She was as far from home as I was and as unattached. She still sits across the table from me and has been the General Superintendent of Home Missions at my house for fifty three years. I seriously doubt if any person who ever lived in her home town in Missouri has ever gathered as many friends who have been to her ^{as} fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers. These with her children and grandchildren rise up to acclaim her and to say that she is still beautiful.

I do not think that it was any accident that brought this rare woman into my life. We joined our fortunes and together began our journey into the Land of Straitened Circumstances. The way has been hard at times and there have been tears that have been justified but

we have never found the land unpeopled of God. If we have been in perplexity it has been because of our own mistakes. Our very poverty has been God's opportunity. I am sure from several experiences that Our Lord knew the state of my pocketbook as well as I.

Let me tell you about the time I baptized a Jewish woman and a house full of children. I had a mission Sunday school near town. One Sunday at the school a woman sent word she wanted to see me. I called and found that it was a Jewish woman who wanted to confess her faith in Jesus as the Christ. She was a long way from any church. I told her to get her friends together and I would bring out the Elders of my church and we would have her make her confession in her own home and among her friends. This I did and she made her confession and was baptized. Immediately she said: "How about my children? In our faith our children go with us. I want my Children to be with me". I told her it was our faith to baptize the children on the faith of the parent. Two of her children made a profession for themselves and I baptized the rest, five of them I think, down to a baby boy in a cradle. As we finished the service and blessed the family, the husband of the woman stepped up and laid five Dollars on the table, saying, "Here is your money, parson". I thanked him but said I had been most amply paid already. He insisted and I told a man to take the money and use it for a treat in the Sunday school in the Christmas service. On the way home on the street car my wife said, "You ought to have taken that money. You know that man never gave anything to church work". I said, "It would never have done to have taken his money. He thought I was out there for the money and it would have ruined the whole thing for him for me to have taken his money". I thought nothing more of it, but before ten days I had married three couples I had never seen before. They paid me thirty Dollars and only when the last one handed me five Dollars did I remember the money I had refused for Jesus sake. I walked into my wife's bedroom with the money in my hands. I said, "You remember

how we turned down that five Dollars last week? Well the Lord has paid it back to us six times over!" He did that same thing for us several times in those days of hard times.

About that time I came to know Grandmother Carpenter. I do not know what to say about a great many old people. There does not seem to be any really satisfactory place in the world for a useless old worldling but there is surely a place for an aged saint, full of the Spirit of Jesus. Maybe the trouble often is not lack of space but lack of grace and that on the part of some old person.

When I came to know Grandmother Carpenter, she was an old, old lady, sitting in her easy chair on the porch. She was one of those who did not walk alone. She walked with God. They were well acquainted. She was as John Bunyan might have said, just camping for awhile in Beulah Land, close to the river and waiting for her summons to cross over. Long, long ago she crossed over and the trumpets sounded for her.

She was not always feeble and old. She was once a bright and happy English girl. Early in life she gave her heart to Jesus and was numbered with some Methodist group in old England. She grew up to be a fine looking young woman and the young men were interested, but she said, "I told the Lord I would never marry any but a praying man". There were not so many of those and the years passed and her man had not showed up. She said, "I was growing older and it looked as if I would die an old maid. It seemed that the Lord had forgotten me. Then ^{" her man} he came along, and ^{" She said} Oh, he was so good to me". Grandmother Carpenter rocked back and forth in her chair and clasped and unclasped her hands in a sort of gentle clapping motion while the tears ran unashamedly down her old face. "Oh he was so good to me! Then the Lord took him away and I was left alone. My son had migrated to America and settled in California. He wrote for me to come and live with him. He sent me the money and I prayed to God and decided to go to America. I bought my tickets and prayed to God and began that long journey. We crossed that awful ocean

but I prayed to God and we landed in New York. I did not know how I would find the depot or find my train in that strange city but I prayed to God and everybody helped me and the people were kind and I found my train and began that long journey. Every mile and every hour I was getting farther and farther away from all I had ever known but I prayed to God. Then we crossed those tremendous mountains and I thought, how will my son know when to meet me after all these days and weeks? What will I do and how will I find him if he does not meet me? I prayed to God. and when the train stopped in San Francisco and I climbed down the steps there stood my son to meet me!"

Once when I was a small boy I visited with my father in a home where a boy about my age was the proud possessor of a hobby horse. I would have been proud indeed to have possessed the same but my father did not have the means to enable me to ride that kind of hobby, but at that very tender age I was getting interested in what has been for me a delightful life time hobby. remarkably inexpensive and rewarding.

At the side of the wood pile at home someone had been cracking black walnuts. One nut had escaped and had fallen down in the chips and mould and had sprouted. As a child I took note of the little tree and tried to protect it. I wanted it to grow and rain down walnuts. My father and mother encouraged me in this and helped me save the tree. The last time I saw it, it was coming to be a big tree. I hope it is still living. This was my first interest in trees. My life hobby has been trees.

Every man, and woman too, ought to have a hobby. It adds to the richness and fulness of life. A hobby is a pursuit or pastime that is different and apart from the daily bread activity and requirements of life. One is tied down to such a large extent to the work that is necessary if one is to live comfortably that some form of recreation becomes most necessary and welcome. A decent hobby often puts one in touch with new and different people and new interests in life. So a hobby may make the left over hours of the day to be the most rewarding. It is also true that so often the hobby becomes the real life activity that a happy hobby is not a thing to be despised.

A hobby need not be an expensive sort of thing. Quite the contrary. Some of the poorest of people have had some of the most delightful hobbies. The hobbies of some of my friends have been beyond my means. I have never had the money to buy various irons, boats, guns, rods and reels and German cameras, not to speak of air craft and race horses. Most of these things will perish with the using and like the tin soldier, soon be gathering dust! But not so with my hobby, trees! Get interested in trees. It will call for little money but much appreciation and affection

and care.

Few of us appreciate the place trees have played in our history. Humanity has never been able to live without trees. We will not be able to continue without trees. The difference now is that trees can no longer be taken for granted. If there are going to be any great forests in the future, someone must make provision for them now. If there are going to be any great trees along our streets a hundred years from now, someone must be putting out those trees today. Think how many trees have been sacrificed that we might be comfortable! Yet very few people among us have ever set out or nourished one tree. Trees are exceedingly interesting. A great tree is an inspiration. Truly, only God can make a tree, but we can help Him look after the little ones!

This tree hobby is a means at hand by which we may do something to bless the generations to come. Your Golf or fishing or boating hobby will cost money and time and when you are gone all will be gone. But suppose you had nourished a young elm or white oak or some nut bearing tree? A hundred years after you have gone away children will be playing in the shade of the tree you nourished. When General Jackson came back from the battle of New Orleans, he ate dinner with a good woman in East Tennessee. He gave her a pecan he had brought from the south. She planted the nut. Some years ago it was the largest pecan tree in the state. A tree hobbyist is dealing with things like that.

A tree hobblist is often permitted to do his part to preserve rare varieties of trees that are ready to disappear from the earth. Some trees are going just as some creatures of the wild have already disappeared. If ever again a village smithy is to stand under a spreading chestnut tree somebody must work at his tree hobby. When have you seen a Chinquapin? Or a Magnolia oak?

My grandfather had in his yard a big Slippery elm. It did not come there by chance. We would take a small limb and scrape off the outer rough bark and chew the inner cream colored inner bark. It filled our

mouths with a pleasant tasting slippery saliva. We thought it was fine and maybe it helped to hold our active stomachs till meal time. So it helped and caused no lung cancer. It had other uses. Sometimes when a "rising" started that looked like sure death, and somebody began to scream if anybody even ventured to look at it, mother would send one of the boys for a limb off of grandfather's Slippery elm tree. She would scrape away the rough outer bark and save the inner. She would cut it up and with hot water she would make a Slippery elm poultice and put it on the disturbance. After a few hours the fire would die down and when the poultice was removed the rising had either burst~~ed~~ or disappeared. Maybe it was not an A bomb after all. What a doctor my mother would have been. She healed me of miseries worse than anything known today, just by taking me in her arms and comforting me. I suppose that is the real reason why now, when I am sick and they take me to the hospital, the beds seem hard and uncomfortable!

I have not seen a Slippery elm in over fifty years. I wish I had one in my yard. Of course I know that now not even a pig would chew the bark and if one is so unfortunate as to find himself possessed of a "rising" he goes to the doctor and gets a "shot". It may cause his great, great grandchildren to come into the world with a redeveloped tail and three ears and all in the wrong place, but it will quell the uprising. The Slippery elm was not so fast or sure but I never heard of such scandalous after effects!

It has been my privilege to live long enough to see some of the trees I have helped to set out come to be great shade trees. It has been my sorrow to see many of them destroyed in the name of progress. However my chief pleasure has been in the fruit and nut trees I have had a part in getting started. Here in following the tree hobby one does come to the expense of nursery stock. Shade trees can be gotten from the forest but a fruit or nut tree to be satisfactory must come from a reputable nursery. It is a sad experience to give years of attention to a tree only to find that your tree will never "bring forth good fruit".

It often happens that the tree lover owns no land of his own. That has

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been the case with me for a large part of my life. Very few people have any interest in improving property that is not their own. Few indeed are ready to pay for the little sprout that is to be set on the land of another. The tree hobbist must be unselfish and have in mind those who are to come. We built a little manse in the Panhandle of Texas. There was not a tree on the place. Very few trees would even grow in that territory. I found that Black locust would grow and sour cherries. A friend gave me some locust sapplings. I set them out in July. They were in full leaf and growing but they lived. That winter I decided to put out a few red cherries in the back yard. My wife did not think too well of it for it was spending money from which we would receive no benefit. I said the trees would help somebody and were set out. After a few years we left that part of the country. Some years later my wife visited in that community and went around to see our old home. She found there a very sick woman, suffering from Pellagra, a deficiency disease. Men did not know then what caused the disease. My wife looked about the place and in the back yard were the cherry trees, loaded with bright red fruit!

You will not lack for your reward. One day a man brought me about a peck of beautiful apples. He said his wife wanted me to have them because I had set out the tree several years before. Every now and then someone sends me a box or bag of fine pecans. As they were gathering the crop they remembered that I had stirred them up to put out the trees and had ordered the trees from the nursery for them. In following my hobby I have encouraged people to put out hundreds of pecan trees. Many of these are already worth while trees in heavy bearing. It intrigues me to think what these trees will mean in the years to come.

I find I can carry on my hobby even in my old age. I would have had to quit the golf links long ago but not my hobby. I can no longer dig a hole deep enough to properly set a young tree but I am still stirring up those who can. For some years now I have been stirring up my neighbors to put out pecan trees in their yards. Some of my friends are beginning to bring me

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pecans in their hands to show me their trees are beginning to bear. Last year we put out in the community one hundred and thirty trees. Did ever a man have a hobby that had in it more of promise?

This is an area where black sweet cherries once were plentiful. Now the trees are dying from old age and that has led to a major disaster. Those grand black sweet cherry pies, big as a dinner plate, have also disappeared! Last winter we set out thirty two cherry trees of the most approved variety, and we intend that shall only be a beginning. Along in June some ten years from now mothers will begin again to bring out of the oven those grand cherry pies, with the luscious purple juice breaking through the top crust!

Now I will not be present when all that begins to come about, but did ever a man have a hobby with such a future?

My hobby has made many friends for me and is making new ones each year when tree planting time comes around. We meet together and we have something in common to talk about. They think about me and I think about them as we work together for those who are to come after us.

I am coming now to write the last chapter in this story and I write it because I wish to tell how the same Hand that has guided before is still with me in old age.

I was retired from the regular pastorate when I was seventy years of age. This was according to the law of the church. However I was privileged to serve in various other capacities as long as I might be able. This I have been glad to do. I have served several churches as supply pastor for varying lengths of time. It has seemed to me I have been more successful since my retirement than before!

Each time I have decided it was time for me to "retire" again and let some competent regular man take over, the question has come up at our house of my making provision for my really declining years. A man owes it to himself and those about him to take thought that he be not an unnecessary burden on society. I had been asked to take care of a mission church in the little city of Asheboro, North Carolina. I looked after the work for a year and a half. The work prospered and it was a delight to be busy once more about the thing I delight to do. Perhaps I failed to take into proper account my nearly foreseer years. However I knew the time had come for a regular man to be in charge of the church.

In the meantime we were thinking of a pleasant little place where we could sit in the evening. We liked our little city so well we had it in mind to buy a lot and, working ourselves and having help in larger matters, to build a modest home. However, we did not do this without prayer that we might do the will of God. Both my wife and I told the Lord if he had something else for us to throw a road block across this path that seemed so alluring to us. We bought an attractive lot with trees and a little stream in front and began to make our plans.

It is so much more satisfactory to walk with the Lord, even in the dark than to try to walk alone in the light. We were making our plans but the Lord had something better for us. I had begun to notice

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an unusual weariness and lassitude after the morning service but I laid it to old age. I would give up the work and get started on the house. One day a man brought some big tile and put it in the little stream in preparation for a drive way to the house to be. I was busy here and there and helped as I might. That night I felt so washed out I decided to consult my doctor. He sent me to the hospital. My heart was tired. It was resting up every now and then and when it did, I felt very old indeed. I gave up the work. I could not help build the house. I came back to a little cottage in Oak Ridge to think it over and take medicine. I turned back the lot in Asheboro and the good man very kindly gave me back my money.

In this community of Oak Ridge is a Military Institute that has been here over a hundred years. Shortly after I came back and before the fall session opened, the President came to me to say they had lost their Chaplain and would I consider taking over the work. It would mean holding the Sunday morning service and preaching to some two hundred boys and young men, having an office and counselling with the young people as might be required. The chapel was only a few hundred yards from my house. With some reservation I thought I ought to take the work.

I began to see the reason in the Asheboro road block. I was not called to be a house builder but a Kingdom builder. I was Chaplain for four years. I quit taking medicine. My heart most uncomplainingly cooperated all the time. I never had a pleasanter work. It may well be that just as I was preparing to sit back and quit, the Lord was getting me ready to do my most important work. One never lives long enough to know with any degree of certainty what he has accomplished in preaching to two hundred young people for four years. I began my fifth year with hope but yielded to my weakness and "retired" again.

During my four years competent men built for me a very satisfactory house and finished it in sixty days. It is indeed a pleasant place and paid for. We love our neighbors and they love us. About us are green

pastures and we can look up and see more of the starry heavens than any place in which we have ever lived. We want it just that way.

The authorities in the Institute are pleased to have me keep my office in the building and go in and out as I please and be at home with the young men. So I sit here in my big rocker. The typewriter and time on my hands has prompted me to write about some of the things I can now look back upon.

Someone has said, "Once a man, twice a child". A trite sort of declaration to remind us that we began in weakness and will go back to the same. However, a boy is a boy but once. That is an experience to be remembered but not repeated. I am glad I was once a boy and that I was a boy when the world seemed to be young. Once a man. I am not too well satisfied about that. Now I am no boy again. Ah no. This is no boy who looks forward to what future there may be, but an old man, living in a house falling to pieces and filled with strange noises and creaking sounds. But the old house stands in Beulah Land, not far from the river and near to the place where Grandmother Carpenter once lived and the front door faces the morning.

Henry Richard McFadyen

Oak Ridge, N. C.