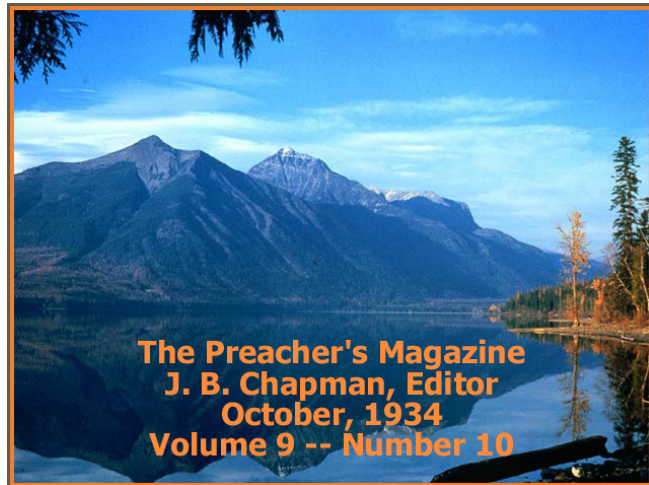


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J. B. Chapman, Editor

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01 -- WHY I PLOW THE FALLOW FIELD -- J. B. Chapman

It was necessary for me to give my wife a little lift with the household duties this morning. As we were nearing the end of the special task, I mentioned that I was chafing to get to my study. And by way of explanation, I said, "I had a long day yesterday, but I did not get much done. The 'muse' would not favor me, and although I really worked hard, I did not produce much and what there was of it was of inferior quality."

My wife answered, "When you have days like that, why don't you just quit and wait for those other days when your mind is fruitful and your thoughts are ready?"

I had not really thought on it before, but pushed for an answer, I thought as I spoke, "Well, it's like making a journey in a car. You strike bad roads and make no more than ten or twelve miles in a whole hour. But you have to stick to it and make the best you can on the poor roads so that in time you will get out to the pavement and cover enough miles to make it count. For although it may seem you are doing almost nothing while wallowing in the mud or pulling through the sand, you are really preparing for the hours that do make a difference.

"And it is like that in study and writing and preparation to preach. If you give up when the work is heavy and the progress slow, you will never have those good days when work is comparatively light and progress more satisfactory. You prepare for the good days on the poor days. These poor days are a sort of gymnasium in which you develop power and strength, and it may be that this is what happens to make some days seem better -- perhaps the sledding is just as heavy as ever, but you are stronger, and that is all the same as though the going were easier.

"Yesterday I fought from early morning until half past three in the afternoon without even stopping for lunch, and really 'nothing happened.' Now this morning I know from inner indications that I have struck a better day, and that I will do more in less time than I have done for a long time."

And so much for this brief conversation with my wife. But, sure enough, I have now been in my study less than an hour and have done practically as much constructive work as I was able to accomplish in six or seven hours yesterday.

A few weeks ago I told a friend in a neighboring state that many of the farmers about my home had not yet even planted their corn: told him I saw them harrowing and rolling and working their land accompanied by clouds of dust, and that they were waiting for rain before planting. My friend was distressed, and said, "Well, it's too late. Their corn will not get out of the way of the frost." But when I got back home and made more definite inquiry I found that these fields had been "rented" by the government as a part of its crop control program, and that it is not

planned to plant them at all. But still I was a little puzzled, and asked, "Why then do they plow and work them so diligently?" "Well," said my informant, "it is necessary to work the land on fallow years just the same. Otherwise they would become so foul with weeds and grass and so hard and baked that they would be fit for nothing next year."

And so I borrow the thought for my own purpose and thought of my fruitless days as "fallow days." And I concluded that there is just as good reason for my working my fallow mental and spiritual fields as there is for the farmer to work his fallow grain field.

A southern farmer said to me, "We always make more cotton on dry years than it looks like we are making, and we always make less on rainy years than it looks like we are making." And I have thought it is somewhat like that in our preaching fields. When times are hard we are doing more to make preachers out of ourselves than during those times when we seem to be doing so well.

I think, then, I could not do better than to exhort all my readers to refuse to get discouraged and refuse to quit when the ground is dry and dusty and the going is slow. For I know that fidelity and application during such times will bring returns in the time of rain. In fact I am convinced that they will bring rain sooner and make it more abundant.

* * *

A pastor down in Oklahoma who has been taking The Preacher's Magazine for more than six years writes his commendation and then adds, "I would like to ask for suggestions, notes, helps and outlines to be used in connection with school talks, baccalaureate sermons and other such services." I pass his suggestion along and ask readers of The Preacher's Magazine to please help me out by sending something for this purpose.

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L. D. Harmon of Bessemer, Alabama, writes, "I have been taking The Preacher's Magazine for a year or more and I find that it is about the most helpful book I have, besides my Bible. My prayer is that it may find its place upon every preacher's desk and that it may be printed until Jesus comes again."

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02 -- EXPOSITORY MESSAGES FROM HEBREWS -- Olive M. Winchester

To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10).

From every standpoint suffering has been considered a calamity in life; man has shrunk from its presence and sought to escape from its dominion. One of the main objectives in life has been to obtain pleasure and avoid pain. Joy has been considered an integrating factor in life and pain a disintegrating factor. But character is not built by those elements which cause life to run on without the stress and strain of the more rugged phases of living. It is the meeting of adversity, suffering and sorrow with equanimity of spirit and firm trust that brings into the life strength and which mellows the spirit. Not only is this true of the race of mankind as a whole, but the ministry of suffering had its relation to Christ our Savior, through it He was perfected in more than one way.

Christ Perfected Through Suffering

When we think of Christ and the ministry of suffering, we connect the thought principally with His atoning work, and this is the supreme act of suffering in His life, but there was a train of suffering down through the days. We know little of the early days of Christ, but what few glimpses are given us, we find that His life was lived as that of the humblest citizen. This, however, may not have been a source of suffering, for many a humble home has more of grace and more of happiness than homes of wealth, but this we do know that Christ's early life was not filled with the luxuries of the day; it was a life of toil and service.

When we come to the active ministry of Christ, then it is that we see the traces of suffering. These we have mentioned in a previous article, the fact that He had no home, the failure of His mother and His brothers to understand His mission, the slowness of His disciples to comprehend His teaching and the opposition of the religious leaders of the day. All these entered into the life of Christ very vitally.

But there was another phase of Christ's suffering, the disciplining of spirit. Here it is difficult to understand because in Christ we have a unique personality; we know that He was truly divine, yet we know that the union of the divine with the human brought into the life of Christ experiences akin to human. In dealing with this subject Curtis says, "Before thoroughly testing my conception of the incarnate person of the Son of God I wish to state it clearly and succinctly. After the incarnation our Lord was one person, living under two abiding structural laws of being, and thus having two kinds of capacity, one kind divine, the other kind human. His impoverishment, therefore, was not as to nature but as to personal experience. And the degree of this impoverishment was due to His redemptive aim to live a typical human life 'down to its dregs of death.' For to live such a life there must be either an erasure (as in infancy) or a modification (as in the temptation) of His original seizure in self-consciousness."

Perhaps this point can be made a little plainer by quoting also Curtis' viewpoint of the infancy of Christ. "The self-consciousness of the Son of God is now in total eclipse, but He himself is still organic in the Godhead and has still all the inherent divine capacity. Not one divine attribute has He lost out of His nature.

And yet there is not an atom of docetic life here. He does not seem to be living the life of a human infant, He is living it. His dependence upon Mary, all the first tiny outreachings of a child's instincts, the first perceptions crawling slowly into clearness--all are completely real -- why? Simply because the structural law of a human being is at this time in supreme dominion, and there is no personal experience of His divine nature."

Christ then entered into the realm of human experience in the incarnation and passed through the phases of human experience save that there was no taint of sin. These phases of human experience were many and varied. There were the external causes of suffering and there was the disciplining of the spirit within. Christ entered not only into the externalities of suffering that break in upon the lives of men but He also went deeper into their lives, He shared in the struggles of the human spirit. These struggles of the human spirit not only result by seeking to bring oneself into proper adjustment to the untoward conditions of life without, but also in seeking to organize one's being in full response at all times to the whole will of God. The passage which reveals this truth in the life of Christ is in the fifth chapter of our epistle, "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (5:7-9, R.V.). Commenting on this passage Westcott says, "The spirit of obedience is realized through trials, seen at least to minister to good. Sufferings in this sense may be said to teach obedience as they confirm it and call it out actively. The Lord 'learned obedience through the things which he suffered,' not as if the lesson were forced upon Him by the necessity of suffering, for the learning of obedience does not imply the conquest of disobedience as actual, but as making His own perfectly, through insight into the Father's will, that self-surrender which was required, even to death upon the cross."

In the human heart of a sanctified soul there is a holy nature imparted by the Holy Spirit, but there is also "the necessity of organizing all the impulses, drives, urges of the nature in keeping with this holy nature; especially is this the most difficult when there is the demand to bring the being in alignment with some of the more intense experiences of life, those experiences which occasion the extreme forms of suffering; there is a shrinking of the flesh, yet the true soul despite the struggle accepts the will of God and learns obedience by self-surrender.

Christ, that He might be to us a faithful High Priest, entered into these human experiences; in place of the sanctified human nature, within the Son of God-was deity, but the ramifications of human nature must needs be brought in alignment with the divine nature and all the experiences thus entailed became a part of His being. Let us quote again from Curtis. "When we say that our Lord took on a human nature, precisely what do we mean? I mean this: He added to the original structural law of His being another law, namely, the law of a finite, dependent creature such as man is. Under this new law man's limited existence could be real to Him. Under the

law of His divine nature He had an infinite intuitive knowledge of man, but He could not have human life as an actual personal experience. In the absolute God there is no normal capacity for the finite. This is not an imperfection in God any more than it is an imperfection in the sun not to be small enough for a candlestick."

The Ministry Of This Perfectness

The resultant effect of such perfecting in the life of Christ reaches out in various ways. One of these we have already mentioned in a previous article that is that Christ is able to succor the tempted. However in dealing with this we related it to the external trials rather than the inner struggles of "bringing every thought into captivity;" now we can carry this farther and feel that Christ knows every inner struggle in the organization of the whole nature that it may respond in obedience to the will of God. What a comforting thought in all of our trials! Herein was Christ "made in all things like unto his brethren."

Another result coming from this perfecting of our Lord and Savior is the fact that it gives confidence unto men to draw nigh. We read, "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16, R.V.). Herein does Christ know all the infirmities of human nature, nay, not only knows, but He has experienced them, He can give grace with understanding of the common bond of experience. Giving an exegesis of this passage, especially verse 15, Westcott says, "The divine glory of Christ might have seemed to interpose a barrier between Him and His" people. But on the contrary, the perfectness of His sympathy is the ground for clinging to the faith which answers to our needs. He is as near to us as the human high-priests (nay, nearer than they) whose humanity inspired the Jewish worshipers with confidence -- the power of Christ's sympathy is expressed negatively and positively. He is not such as to be unable to sympathize; nay, rather He has been tried in all respects after our likeness, and therefore He must sympathize from His own experience."

Moreover the fact that Christ endured is always an inspiration and source of comfort to all, so the writer to the Hebrews exhorts, "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:1, 2, R.V.). Christ endured the acme of suffering, then His children may take courage and follow His example. The practical importance of the perfection of Christ Westcott states for us:

"It gives a vivid and natural distinctness to our historic conception of the Lord's life on earth.

"It enables us to apprehend, according to our power, the complete harmony of the divine and human natures in one Person, each finding fulfillment, as we speak, according to its proper law in the fullness of one Life.

"It reveals the completeness of the work of the incarnation which brings to each human power and each part of human life its true perfection.

"It brings the universal truth home to each man individually in his little life, a fragment of human life, and presents to us at each moment the necessity of effort, and assures us of corresponding help.

"It teaches us to see the perfect correspondence between the completeness of the divine work and the progressive realization of it by man."

Thus we see that there was a distinct ministry of suffering in the life of Christ and that ministry of suffering while it had its most complete fulfillment in the atonement for sin, yet it has its fulfillment also in the ministrations of Christ helping our infirmities.

**"Out of the depths to Thee I cry,
Whose fainting footsteps trod
The paths of our humanity,
Incarnate Son of God!**

**"Thou Man of grief, who once apart
Didst all our sorrows bear,
The trembling hand, the fainting heart,
The agony, and prayer!**

**"Is this the consecrated dower,
Thy chosen ones obtain.
To know Thy resurrection power
Through fellowship of pain?**

**"Then, O my soul, in silence wait;
Faint not, O faltering feet:
Press onward to that blest estate,
In righteousness complete.**

**"Let faith transcend the passing hour,
The transient pain and strife,
Upraised by an immortal power,
The power of endless life."**

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03 -- THE GOD OF MORDECAI -- E. Wayne Stahl

On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

"And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus.

"And the king said, What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him."

These were the words read one day by a Christian worker on his knees. He had been having a sore trial. With all his heart he had longed to engage in a certain service for the advancement of God's kingdom. It seemed to be his heavenly Father's will that he should do this work. But though the Lord had set before him this "great door and effectual," yet, as in Paul's experience, there were "many adversaries," some of which appeared to have complete power to prevent this servant of Christ entering into the field of labor. His heart was heavy as he looked at the dreadful barriers. But he did not lose his confidence. With the writer of the 42 Psalm he could have said to himself, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." In the midst of the frustration he approached the divine throne. He fasted and prayed, supplicating that his mighty Father would enable him to begin the work he so longed to do for the glory of His name. This Christian worker not only talked to God; he let God talk to him through the Word. The passage at the beginning of this article was one of the scriptures read. After meditating on this story of the royal insomnia, which was part of God's method of answering Mordecai's petition, the baffled brother prayed that God would keep somebody awake all night on his behalf. And here is what took place.

That same night there was a Christian gentleman, twelve hundred miles distant, who found that "his sleep fled from him," and he was constrained to spend the wakeful hours in praying and thinking about the disappointed worker so far away. In the course of his intercession and meditation a voice seemed distinctly to say to him, "Send that Christian worker a check and have him come here and work with you in a mission."

He obeyed. The worker came to "his desired haven." Mordecai's God had manifested Himself as the same yesterday, today and forever.

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04 -- MAKING A MINISTER -- Paul S. Hill

Unchurching The Church

Just why the unsaved stay away from the church so consistently and in such large numbers constitutes a question of large proportions. Frequently we have asked unsaved people for a real honest answer as to why they did not attend church; but we have received no satisfactory answer. They do not seem to know just why it is that they stay away. The fact that they do stay away is serious. It is not only serious for the church, but it is even more serious for the unsaved, and for the country at large. A large majority of non-church going people is a menace to any country. With such a condition the morals of the country are never safe.

This fact of the non-church going attitude of the world has impressed itself on the church, and at least some of the church's outstanding leaders have tried to remedy the situation by carrying the battle into the enemies' camp. They have moved to get nearer to the heart of the trouble by taking the church out of the regular church buildings and giving it temporary housing in tents or tabernacles. They have reasoned that if the world will not come to the church, then we will take the church more into the methods the world is used to. If they will not come to, us we will go to them. We think that in reality back of the present tabernacle movement is the desire to get the battle nearer the enemies' camp. This is laudable in conviction, but it now appears that the method is not meeting with such success as the leaders hoped.

In the first place the world has not gone en masse to the tabernacle meetings. A few may have strayed in, but for the most part it has been church people that have gone to the tabernacles and supported the meetings financially. A survey would probably show more of a spirit of interdenominationalism, or non-denominationalism in a tabernacle movement, there is more of a mix up of creeds and Christian experiences than would be possible in a church meeting, but just the same they are church people and not raw worldlings.

On that point the tabernacle movement has failed quite largely in its main objective. The world is not reached very extensively by this move on the part of the church.

Another result of the tabernacle movement is to decrease regular church attendance. The church people who attend the tabernacle meeting cannot go to church at the same time, nor are they likely to support the church either with their finances or prayers as well as they have been in the habit of doing. At this point of the program there is evidenced at least a little actual damage to the church. In her effort to reach the world she had partly emptied her pews and her purse, which she could afford to do if results warranted it, but which she can ill afford to do on the basis of such meager returns.

It does not seem that the results of the tabernacle movement are all that the church people who engage in it expected, though doubtless it has done some good. Perhaps if the tabernacle type of worship were to invade the church, so that the regular service of the church would be less formal and denominational, better results would be obtained.

However we look at it we must believe that the church as an organism and an organization is a necessity in the world, and anything that tends to destroy the spiritual life of the church as an organism is dangerous, and likewise must we look with alarm on anything that tends toward disorganization. Even if church machinery at times seems a bit unwieldy and ponderous, yet none of us would seriously think of disorganizing and unchurching the spiritual people of the world. We do not know that the tabernacle movement has had very much effect toward unchurching the church, we only mention it as a possible danger if overstressed. It does seem, however, that any move the church makes that sacrifices any of her doctrinal positions or her opportunities of teaching the children and youth of her number is a move in the wrong direction.

Inasmuch as the world is not reached in any larger number than before and that there may be a possible danger in the tabernacle and independent method, we suggest that there must be a better way to accomplish the wished for result. May the Lord bless us all.

The Congregation As Sermon Makers

There is a method of preaching which deals with a subject without much regard to its adaptability to the congregation that is present to hear it. The preacher has made preparation, chosen a subject, arranged his divisions, and preaches his sermon with only the end in view of telling what is the content of the text. There is another method in which the faces of the people before him are a large factor in the sermon. It does not mean less preparation than the other method, nor should the minister depart from his text but the minister who gets his sermon largely from the faces of his people will be more likely to help them.

To look into the face of someone in the congregation and see registered there an appeal for spiritual help, is a challenge that a minister must accept. It is his business to help. He is preaching that sermon with the object of helping. He cannot afford to go on plowing when there is wheat that is waiting to be garnered. It will pay well to cut the sermon short and do a little reaping while the reaping is good.

There is always sermon material in a crowd. Whether or not the preacher knows them he can read tales of need in their faces. It is easy to pick out discouraged men, or men sodden with sin, or proud or willful men, and it is a good thing to say a few words specially for such, but under no condition should such words appear personal, or their intended good will do more damage than can be undone in many days. The people who listen to a sermon are for the most part

present in a friendly attitude, which is just the attitude which makes helping them a joyous possibility, and the minister who reads in their faces a need for help of a certain kind can afford to digress if necessary in order to help the best he can.

Some sermons are largely made by the congregation. Their pull on the preacher is such that the sermon will go out along the lines of congregational thinking and feeling. If they contain helpful truth or advice they are bound to be a blessing. However it sometimes happens that the preacher is tempted into extravagant or extreme statements, especially when the crowd is shouting happy, and in a rollicking mood. If the preacher does not have a care the dead fly will get into the ointment. The preacher will usually do better if he sticks to his prepared sermon quite rigidly, with only time enough out to answer the questions that the hungry look on some face suggests.

It seems that these sermons, the kind that are suggested by the congregation, are the easiest to get out of the habit of preaching, and the hardest to reclaim when once the habit is lost. We would do well to ask ourselves whether we pay as much attention to the congregation when we preach as we used to. Does the sermon respond to the congregation, or is it preached as it was prepared in the study without much thought of the sermon's responsiveness to the people. Of course we all want the people to respond to our sermons, but what about those sermons that respond to the people? There surely are two sides to a sermon. The preacher will do well to pay some attention to the congregational side.

There is need of added preparation for a sermon that the congregation helps to preach. Not only the text and the sermon divisions to arrange in proper order, but there is that bigger, fatherly leadership of the preacher's heart and head. It is no small thing to preach from a text, but it is a bigger thing to preach from that text and at the same time answer the question that a man's face asks when the man is bothered about some problem which the preacher can only guess, but to which he must give the right answer. All sermons need preparation, but this kind needs more.

Ministerial Dissatisfaction

We take it that the personal basis for the ministerial life is the "urge" or "call" to preach. It appears to us that preaching as a vocation, or something arising from personal choice with which God has had nothing to do, is all out of scriptural order. The personal basis for preaching is the personal "call," the demands of God on the minister's soul.

This call to preach is expressed for the most part in preaching. Not only is it expressed in preaching, but is largely kept alive by it. With many the call to preach has subsided within the soul, and no longer is an urgent demand, simply because the urge has not been expressed in preaching.

We agree with the remark that we once heard that the call to preach was a call to prepare for preaching. To receive a call to preach, and then to pay no attention to the necessary preparation is a sin against the whole preaching business, as well as against God, and yet it is in this field of preparation that there is great ministerial dissatisfaction. Who among us feel as well prepared as we wish we were? And this is probably as it should be. To come out of the pulpit feeling that we have done as well as anybody on earth could possibly have done is about the worst thing possible in ministerial failure. Instead of being pleased over an attitude like that we should be ashamed of such ministerial pride. But most of us have enough mistakes and shortcomings evident during the preaching hour so that we are saved from that sin. Who among us has not felt humiliated and almost sad when we got home to think how poorly we handled such a good theme? We all have experienced that ministerial dissatisfaction.

There are two possible results of ministerial dissatisfaction. One is discouragement, and a yielding to the temptation to stop trying to be a good preacher. The other is a determination to do better in the future, to correct the weak places in the sermon, to adjust the sermon so that less time will be given to the less important part and more to the important, to rectify the gestures, etc.

It seems that those who put off their call to preach until they are of mature years have trouble because of it. It is harder for an old man to learn to preach. A young man's mind is more plastic and his congregation is more sympathetic than that of the older man. If a young man fails the people will say, "He is young yet, and will do better when he is older." If he does well the people will praise him and help him along. But if an old man fails they will not excuse it for they know he should do better, and if he does well they will take it for granted that he should do well, and not thank him for it. So ministerial dissatisfaction is more valuable to a young man than to an older one because he is less likely to fall into the temptation of giving up. The people themselves are more encouraging to him. Youth is on his side and the tendency to try again and do better is stronger than with the older man. On the other hand, when the older man meets ministerial dissatisfaction he either goes down under it or fights his battle alone. Not many will say to him, "Keep at it, you will do better next time, and make a great preacher yet." For the most part he must bear his grief alone and face his failures by himself. However he should not despair. He can do better. He can trot a little more time on preparation. Even if his mind is unused to study, and the problem of homiletical arrangement is hard, he can overcome it if he will stick to it. Recently we learned of a minister who began to preach late in life. All he had to his credit was good religion. His schooling was about nil, and his past life had been rough and tumble, and wholly lacking in orderly thinking. We have known this man for years, and he has consistently kept at it. I asked his wife, who is an educated woman, how his language was during his sermons, and she told me that frequently there would be entire sermons without a grammatical error, and that the subject matter of his sermons was good. Ministerial dissatisfaction had not downed him. He kept at it, and has won out. Others can do the same.

But this matter of ministerial dissatisfaction is bigger than the sermon. It extends to about every part of ministerial living and activity. The whole ministerial program is filled with dissatisfaction, regardless of how much progress we have made. We can all see places where we could have done better. Some of us have found that it is possible to spend the day in unceasing activity in ministerial matters and come to the evening unsatisfied with the day's work. Not that we have not tried hard, or that we have been lazy, but that we blundered, and were weak in our efforts to do good, or were disappointed in what we hoped to accomplish. Taking stock of the day we were filled with ministerial dissatisfaction. How can we do our work better? How accomplish more?

Personally we have found our best cure for ministerial failures to be: first, prayer; second, Bible study; third, studying theology; and then reading in the various fields of science, and conversing with godly men. This is about the order of their helpfulness to me as a minister. The first four I have always at hand, and so does every other minister. The fifth is not always so easy to secure. But these things go a long way toward making for ministerial well being, and without them failure is about certain. None of us should be entire failures. Even ministerial dissatisfaction should be a booster to our ministry. We must be better ministers, all of us.

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THE END