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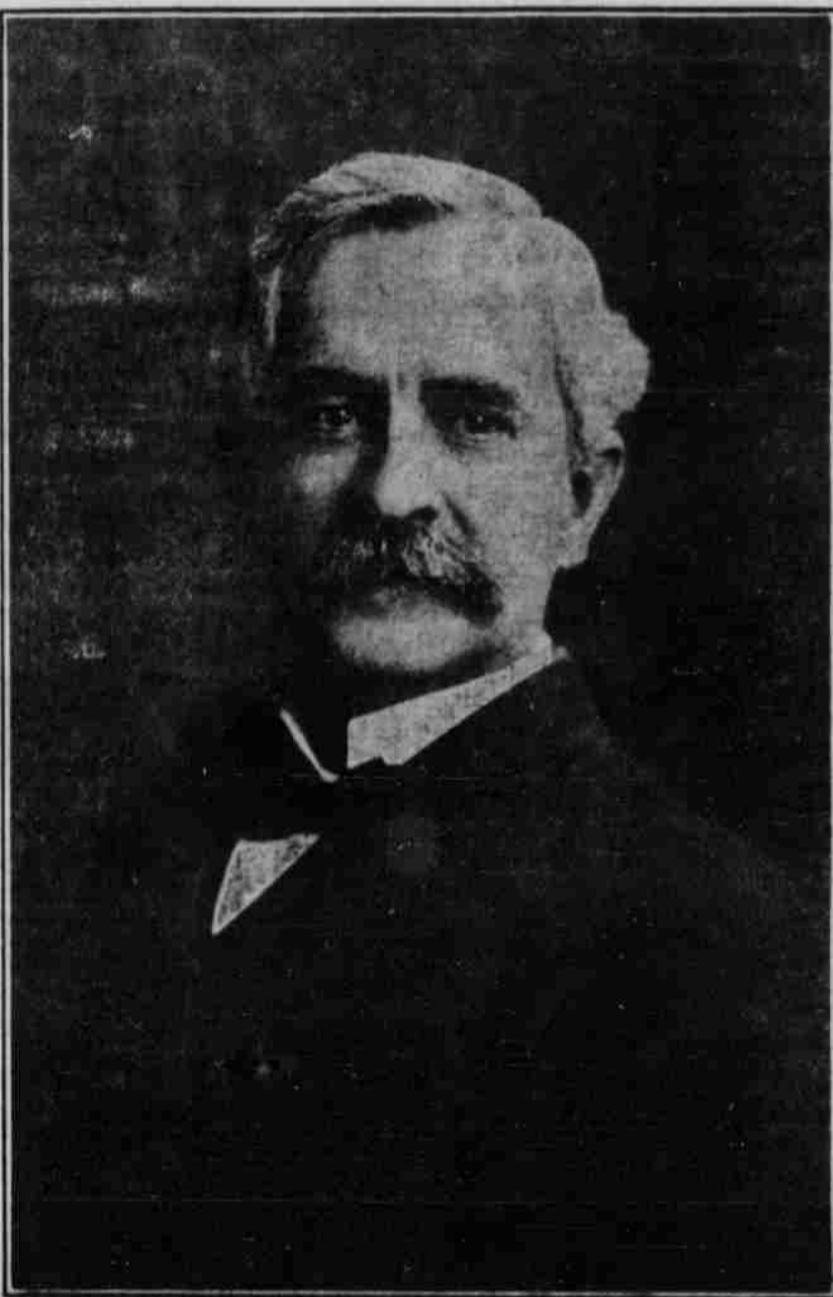
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It all seems to me like a dream that the Lord should lead me from one place to another as I have sought to follow the divine cloud and fire until now I find myself in the great surging city of London; yet I have been impressed by the fact that you have much the same problems here in Mt. Airy that we have in London, the problem of sin and unbelief, of death and of life. And as my mind has been running back, and I cannot help it, I have thought of the first sermon I preached in Mt. Airy to about fifteen people. I have felt that I would like to preach about 100 sermons this morning; but the day is too hot for that, and at last my mind has settled down upon a text that is kindred to the one I preached my first sermon from. In the first verse, first chapter of Ezekiel in connection with the first verse of the 37th chapter. "The Heavens were opened and I saw visions of God * * * The hand of the Lord was upon me and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones," and my subject on that first occasion was "The valley of dry bones, and how to raise them." This morning my subject is the preparation which every Christian needs as he enters the Valley of Dry Bones. There has been some magic power at work during the past thirty five years, to which our dear Brother Haymore referred, transferring death into life and bones into men and women, and we would like to know the secret of that power. Created in the image of God, man has become only a bone of his former self. "Can these bones live?" asked God of the Prophet, and the Prophet referred the question back to Him for answer. "Lord God thou knowest." Is there any way whereby a bone can be transformed again into a man? God tells how, in this vision given us in the first chapter of Ezekiel. At least five times the Heavens are said to have opened; above Christ at his Baptism; when he heard the divine words of the Father; above Peter, when on the housetop he was taught that the Gentiles should have the Gospel; above Stephen, when he was being martyred; above John on the Isle of Patmos, when he too caught glimpses of celestial glory, and above Ezekiel when he stood among the captives by the river of Chebar. "I saw visions of God," and this vision of God was a preparation for the vision of bones, which is the vision of man. And what did he see first of all in that vision of God? A union of the human with the Divine. Peculiar creature with wings, and under each wing a human hand, the human hand, of course, standing for humanity, and in the poetical portions of the scripture the wing always refers to deity. Whenever you see that word wing in the pages of the Bible, it refers directly or indirectly to God; so that the union of the hand with the wing, means the union of man with God. The hand is under the wing; the wing moves the hand, rather than the hand moving the wing. I think the tendency in our Theology is to magnify man rather than God; much hand, little wing; but when we link ourselves with God and are willing that the wing should move the hand we are ready for the Valley of Dry Bones. If you go into the Valley of Bones to raise them by the process of manipulation with only the hands, you will leave broken hearted. No hand can put life into death. If I had a blackboard here I'd write on it the figure 1; then I would put a big nought before it, and it is still 1; then I'd put 2, 3, 100 and 1,000 noughts before it; it is still 1. Then I'd take that same 1 and a little nought to the right of it and it is 10, two noughts and it is 100, three noughts and it is 1000, and so on. If you put God first in your mind, in your heart, in your life, he can still create something out of nothing. He can take the very Valley of Death and make of it an Army of Life.

Look at this vision a little more closely and you will see reason linked with God. These peculiar creatures have the face of a man and the human face everywhere stands for intelligence, for reason for mind; but linked with the wing, intelligence joined with the Divine. Reason without God, upon which some men pride themselves, is intelligence wallowing in the mud. But when intelligence is linked with, when the hand is joined with the wing, you have the divine ideal. And if you go into the Valley of Bones to raise them into life by the reasoning process alone, you cannot reason one bone into life; there is no response to your arguments in a bone. It takes the truth from heaven to give them life, and if you go and try to save men in Mount Airy or in London by just the process of reasoning, you'll find yourself disappointed; but if you link your intellect with the Holy Spirit, with God, if you are willing that all your intellectual endeavors shall be governed by the master mind of God, you are ready for the Valley of Dry Bones. Then as you look a little more closely, you will see another wing and there the face of a lion; and the lion in Scripture always stands for courage; not courage in the face of danger so much. The bones won't hurt you; they may make you feel a trifle queer if you walk among them in the dusk and quiet of the evening, but they will not harm you. There are difficulties in life, and it takes a courage to meet difficulties superior to the courage that meets danger. A man can charge into battle realizing that the world is looking at him, willing to be killed if need be; but when he steps down to face the difficulties he sometimes despairs. When Jehovah commanded Joshua to go into battle, to meet the Canaanites and conquer the land he said "Be of Good Cheer." When He commanded Solomon to build the Temple, which involved years of toil and seemingly unsurmountable obstacles, He said, "Be of Good Courage;" and it takes more courage to meet the difficulties of Temple Building than it does to fight armies. The fact is, I had rather undertake to turn 10,000 men into bones than one bone into a man. You can destroy so much more readily than you can build up. It is easy to go into an Art Gallery filled with beautiful paintings and statuary and with a hammer destroy everything; but, if you go there with chisel and pencil, you will find difficulty in restoring them. Now as I look back over the past 35 years it seems to me I can see difficulties overcome, mountains removed by the touch of faith, great obstacles prayed out of the way, worked out of the way, waited out of way—just because you have linked yourself with God. That brings you to the third point "The Winged Patience." There is the face of an ox, and the ox everywhere stands for patience, perseverance, for courage under the yoke, for duty in the dust. It is easy to mount upon the wings of an eagle, or to run and not grow weary; but to walk and not to faint is harder. When you come down to the walk and the hum-drum of life and the dusty duties of every day toil, your heart is apt to fail you. Many a preacher standing before a great crowd and preaching an eloquent sermon does not appear so well to his wife at home. He is sometimes like Jonah under the gourd vine, despondent and angry. We can meet the crises and the emergencies so much more readily than we can the humdrum and the routine. Stanley said that in his travels he didn't mind the elephants that he could bring down with his Remington Rifle, but he did fear the chiggers, miserable little insects, that got under the nails of the hands and feet and killed some of his men. The chigger was beyond his reach, little and contemptible, yet that was what killed them. For my part, I had rather meet a Bengal tiger or an African lion, if I had a good rifle, than to fight Jersey mosquitoes on a hot night. It takes more courage to fight mosquitoes and keep your patience than it does to fight lions. Do you know some times mosquitoes join the Church? I do not know

The Preparation Which Every Christian Needs as He Enters the "Valley of Dry Bones"

Sermon preached by Dr. Dixon at First Baptist Church, Mount Airy, Sunday Morning, July 13th.



Dr. A. C. Dixon, of London, England.

whether you have any in Mt. Airy with its good pure atmosphere or not, but I have never yet been pastor of a church that did not have a few mosquitoes in the congregation; men and women who come to prayer meeting just to buzz and bite; who come to the Trustees Meeting just for a buzz and a bite. It's nothing but buzz and bite, and it takes more grace to meet the mosquitoes than it does to meet the lions. Sam Jones said he never did sympathize much with Jonah; that he had just as lieve be swallowed by a whale as not; but what bothered him was to be bitten and nibbled to death by minnows. It takes less grace to meet the great crises and emergencies of life than it does to bear the worries and petty trials of every day duty. The proudest picture I ever saw is Murillo's Kitchen Scene—a great canvas, and on that beautiful canvas a woman cooking dinner—a most commonplace affair—but as you gaze at that picture you see angel faces appear; the angels are helping the woman cook dinner, and bye and bye as you gaze a trifle longer, you perceive that the woman herself is an angel; she has wings. Murillo may have meant that it is angelic to cook a good dinner, but he went deeper than that; he meant to say that it was angelic to do well the humble duties of the domestic walks of life. An ox with wings. What breaks the most of us down is doing the humdrum separated from God, trying to do the wearing work and details of every day without linking ourselves with the Divine; and if the devil can just get us off from God in the kitchen, on the farm, in the store, he will beat us every time. This linking of God with the human, with the ox, with the lion, is a preparation for the Valley of Dry Bones, for it takes courage, endurance, and humdrum work there. "He set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones," or rather he sets you down in the midst of a great city with its millions of dry bones lying about, bleaching on the sands, and sometimes you feel like running away; but God set you down, and He says, "Be

brave, be a man, be an ox, be a lion, link with me, and I will give you the victory sooner or later." Then we see again the winged astral; the face of an eagle, and the eagle stands everywhere for soaring, rising on wings above dust, and gazing into the sun. That's the Christian's privilege, and I am sorry for the man or woman who never soars, who's willing always to live with feet on the earth. Many of us are like the quail that just rises, flies low, and drops again into the dust. We have to get out of ourselves, and the limitations of the flesh, to come out into life and the broad expanse of God's great glory. The ox-like work linked with the eagle's aspiration is the Christian's privilege. The fact is we can never tell what is great and what is little. I have learned that little is much when God is in it. I stood the other day under the old thatched cottage roof in the Town of Taversham, Eng. in which Chas. H. Spurgeon preached his first sermon, and I felt that I was on holy ground. The young student preached his first immature sermon to a little group of village folks. Some one said "there is a man across the road who heard him; and I said, "I am going to see that man." I went over there, and found a little cottage, surrounded by vines and flowers, and an old man 29 years old in the midst of the beauty, eye bright, step elastic, voice clear, and as we talked he said, "Would you like to hear my favorite hymn?" and with a sweet tone he repeated it: "There is a house not made by hands eternal in the skies." I doubt very much whether that old man has ever been out of the village (I did not ask him), for he looks as if he had lived right there among his flowers always. But who is the greatest, Spurgeon, preaching to the millions on earth, or the poor man in the thatched cottage, just living his honest, faithful christian life, reproducing Jesus in the midst of the village folks? It is just possible that this old man may get the brighter crown. Who knows? Then I went and saw the place where Spurgeon was

baptized, and stood on the banks of the river, which flowed through a meadow where buttercups and daisies grow, and I looked out upon the big expanse of horizon of cloud and sky above, then down at the little buttercups and daisies. Some one said, "there lives in the village a woman who was baptized with him," and I said, "I will see her, if it takes me all day." I found her in her little cottage home, 82 years old, bright, cheery, happy. She had never been to London but once in her life. Then I thought of the great expanse of sky, which meant Spurgeon's influence and the little buttercups and daisies which meant this true woman's life in her little corner, and I know that the buttercups and daisies will get as bright a crown. God says, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life," and if you will link yourself to God just as a little buttercup or daisy you will get the crown, just as if you had written for the ages or preached for the millions. And as you look a little more closely you will notice a winged stability. All these creatures have feet like calves' feet, and you have to turn over to the Prophet to understand all that. "Lord God, make my feet like hind's feet," and the hind's foot is made for movement on slippery places. The hind can pass safely right on the edge of a precipice and leap from rock to rock, move very rapidly and yet very safely; and that's what we need; agility with stability; to know how to stand for truth, and to know how to do something for God at the same time. You will find that some people stand for nothing in particular. They just want to be on the move. You ask them what they believe, and for the life of you, they cannot say. They have the agility but not the ability. You sometimes make progress by standing still; you can be in such a nervous hurry that you never get anywhere. Two sail boats were running a race on the Jersey coast; the wind was very strong, the waves tossed high. One of the Captains, looking ashore, noticed that though the wind was so very strong, the tide was really stronger, and he just cast anchor, and stood still, leaving the other boat far behind; and thus he won the race. What we need to know is how to anchor in Gods truth, having the agility and also the stability to stand for God the truth of Christ. Then as you look you will see a winged fellowship. These wings are joined together, all united. The spirit of this age is to get together. Anything to get together, to work together! Men who don't believe in Christ at all are trying to work with people who bow down before Him. I was in Chicago preaching for Mr. Moody during the Worlds Convention of Religions some years ago, when an effort was made to combine all the religions of the world. An attempt was made to mix paganism and Christianity; descendants of the Prophet of Baal, believing just what those old prophets in Elijah's time did; descendants of the Jewish Sanhedrin, who sent Jesus Christ to the Cross, and they have not changed a bit; and side by side with them were the Disciples of Christ all making an attempt to join hands in working together. We must get together in Christ. There must be a union of wings; a union with the Divine, and if we cannot get together in Christ, there is no use going into the Valley of Bones. When I was Pastor in Brooklyn a man came to me and said, "We are having a union meeting out in town and want you to join us; we need you; it is the greatest union you ever saw; all the denominations in town have united, even the Unitarians, and the Universalists and the Rationalists have come in;" and I said, "My brother if you will tell me how to work with a Unitarian without first working on him I will gladly join you." How can I work with a man who makes fun of the cross that saves from sin? But when I meet a man who unites with me in the service of

Jesus Christ I am moved to give him my hand. Then as you look again you will see a winged progress, and that's my last point. Winged wheels, and the wheel is everywhere the symbol of progress. Civilization goes forward on wheels. Take out the wheels and progress drops. I came here on wheels; I expect to go back to London on wheels; whether I am on the ocean or on the land it will be the wheel that will take me there. These wheels so immense and so full of eyes that they were terrible. Wheels within wheels, indicating complete organization upon the earth; the organization of the Church of Christ for the purpose of going into the Valley of Bones to raise them into life. You will notice the spirit of these living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures went forward the wheels went forward. We need to link our organizations with Gods spirit. Do great things, make great plans for God, for organization; so big that they are terrible, putting all the eyes you have into them, all the wisdom you can pack into them. Somehow I feel that you Christian people, you Baptist brethren have had a big vision of Christ, going forward in the name of the Master. The little organization of 35 or 40 years ago has grown into this large work enclosed in these granite walls; you have had a vision of God that was great, but there's still a greater field. Jesus pronounced himself, "Son of Man," not the son of a Jew, not the son of a Roman, nor of an Englishman, nor a German, nor an American, but the Son of Man. The blood of all the ages is in his veins; and a heart big enough to take in all humanity, even unto the uttermost parts of the world. If I had to run the organizations of the Tabernacle alone I'd smash to pieces in less than three months. I think there are over 45 organizations together, and all important. Too many for one man alone to handle, but each day I get down before God and say, "Lord, this is Thy work; fill the wheels and make them respond to the spirit of God; if there is a cog in it that is not of Thy manufacture break it to pieces; if there is one that Thou art not in destroy it." Its a great comfort to feel that. Just try to run the organization yourself and you will feel nervous and by and by a cog will fly out and hit a Deacon in the eye. Don't trust the organization, but trust God and you can depend upon it that the organization will be full of life. I got a message from heaven which I tried to pass on in Raleigh and will give to you; it came to me that a famous violinist would play one night on a \$5,000.00 violin. Ten thousand people paid 25c a head to go in to that vast auditorium and hear that celebrated musician play upon the \$5,000.00 violin. He came before them with the instrument in his hands; he keyed it up and began playing. It was so sweet it was so thrilling that they cheered, they waved their hands, they shrieked their approval; and in the midst of all that enthusiasm he lifted his violin and smashed it to pieces on the back of a chair. The fragments flew into the eyes of the people around him; everybody thought he was crazy. "What shall we do?" Some shrieked, some groaned! He stood there on the platform with the fragments of the violin still in his hand and lifting them up, he said, "Ladies and Gentlemen that violin cost just \$2.00. Now I will play on my \$5,000.00 violin;" and the music from the \$5,000.00 instrument did not seem much sweeter than that of the \$2.00 instrument. "\$5,000.00 violins do not make music. It takes a musician to put the music into it and to get the music out of it. You have paid your 25c to hear my \$5,000.00 violin. Now I want you to know you are listening to me, not the instrument." And as I heard it I said, "Lord, Jesus, I may be made of plain common stuff, I may be a \$2.00 violin, but take me in thy hands, bring the music out of me by

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