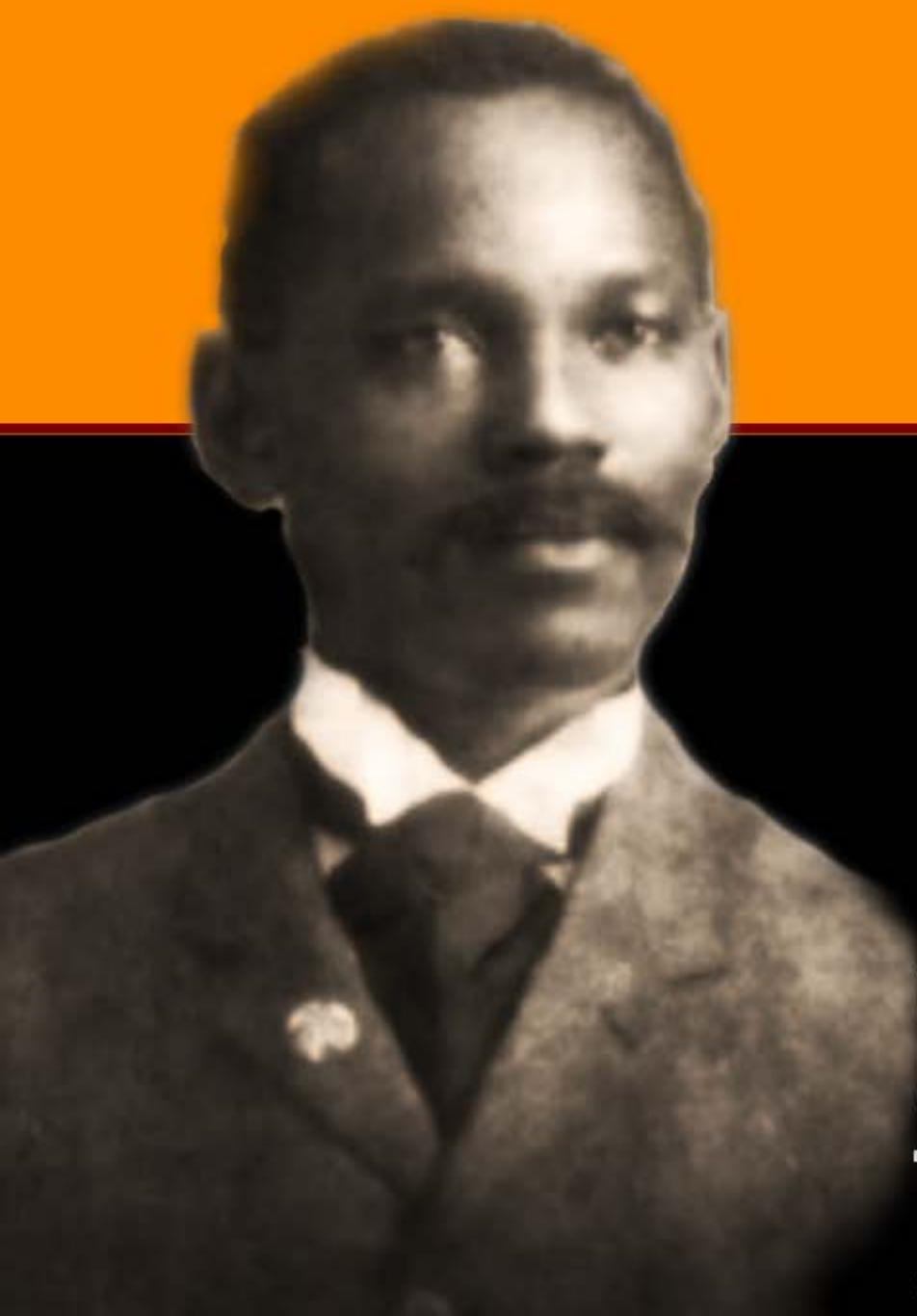


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Rev. Hargrave's Sermons



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And they shall build the old wastes. Isa. 61:4.

Restoration.

This passage of Scripture should be doubly precious to all of us. Precious not alone because it is God's word as expressed through one of the major prophets, but also precious because our Savior used these very words on the occasion of his going into the synagogue in his home city, Nazareth, as his custom was to do on the Sabbath. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty, them that are bruised. So preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:17-19. Then again, they should bring hope to us because of the message of hope they inspire our hearts with.

We lament our failures, and waste of opportunities. We recognize the truth to which our attention has been directed by a servant of our common Lord and Master: to the end and that" All waste is wicked. It is so in war. Ever taken at its lowest estimate, think of the ruin of glorious temples, and exquisite sculptures, and works of art, -all ground to dust, as Mr. Ruskin says, by mere human rage. Florence in Italy and many of the Southern cities have been the warfields of Europe.

What waste! Why smile at the child who builds houses for the wind or sea to smite down? Man builds, and then with the waves of maddened war-lust dashes to pieces his own best works. This is only the material side of the waste of war. I say all waste is wicked.

And I have to speak of human hearts and lives. Much more precious these than sculptured column or lofty fane. Yes, do not let us forget that the words of Christ refer to life present as well as life to come." What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own life." Wasted opportunities for soul culture may put one into such a state.

I. Let us notice in the first place, that all lives were designed to have a Divine Ideal in them. We cannot understand the "why" of creation at all apart from that. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Ecl. 7:29. If the end is missed all is missed. And man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

If the column does not stand erect and uphold the building, it is nothing to me that you decorate it when on the ground. It is not serving its purpose lying on the ground. So man was made in this highest end to glorify God; and his life is blighted if he does not glorify God.

Our Savior said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

1. Lives are blighted, if certain seasons of spring and seed-time, which cannot return, pass idly by. Men may be saved; for the precious blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin, even in old age. But they cannot hear the fruit of a spiritual manhood, or of a Christian childhood.

2. Lives are blighted, if not filled with the power of immortality. How ever noble and glorious they may appear, their fruits wither, there is no deep soil; the roots do not strike into the eternal life.

3. Lives are blighted, if not influential as good soil to be used for harvests. Man does not live for the mere enjoyment and admiration of spiritual beauty in hours of meditation. There must be fruit in the tree for others to gather. It is disappointing in the autumn to lift the leaves and find no rich bloom of purple fruit. "Abide in me," "So," Says Christ, "shall ye bear much fruit."

We agree with the sentiment that "There is help even in an inimitable ideal of life. We shall never here perfectly do the will of God, fulfill all His will. But we must aim toward it. "Bring back the flag to the men," said someone to a standard-bearer who was pushing on to a parapet faster than the ranks could follow. "Bring up the men to the flag!" was the heroic reply.

To go where God leads, to do what he bids and wait everywhere and always for his signal, is the grand perfection of heroism.

General Elliot, governor of Gibraltar during the siege of that fortress, was making a tour of inspection to see that all under his control was in order, when he suddenly came upon a German soldier standing at his post silent and still, but he neither held his musket nor presented his arms when the general approached.

Struck with the neglect, and unable to account for it, he exclaimed, "Do you know me, sentinel, or why do you neglect your duty?"

The soldier answered respectfully: "I know you well, general, and my duty also; but within the last few minutes two of the fingers of my right hand have been shot off, and I am unable to hold my musket."

Why do you not go and have them bound up, then?" asked the general.

"Because," answered the soldier, "in Germany a man is forbidden to quit his post until he is relieved by another."

The general instantly dismounted his horse. "Now, friend," he said, "give me your musket, and I will relieve you. Go and get your wounds attended to."

The soldier obeyed, but went to the nearest guardhouse, where he told how the general stood at his post; and not till then did he go to the hospital and get his bleeding hand dressed. This injury completely unfitted him for active service but the news of it having reached England, wither the wounded man had been sent, King George III expressed a desire to see him, and for

his bravery made him an officer. What do you suppose the King of glory will do for one of His soldiers of the Cross who has shown such fidelity, and loyalty to His cause? The faith of the centurion is commented upon as being above any that the master had found in Israel.

II. All wasting of life is traceable. What to? Well, you can trace the blight to something in the atmosphere, something at the root, or some confinement from the free breath of heaven. So you can trace human waste and moral waste.

I. Sometimes it comes from absence of faith. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." 2. Sometimes it comes from absence of love. It is love that makes the other graces grow and bring forth fruit. Love is warmth and life when inspired by Christ. Love can bear much and hope on. But when love's ashes are white, life is blighted indeed. 3. Sometimes it comes from indifference. Let it alone. That is enough. Leave religion to take care of itself. Then, like the best garden, it soon becomes desolate.

III. Wasted lives are reparable only by redemption. In the body there is a kind of self-healing after sickness. Blood will stanch itself. Not so with the soul; that requires a Divine Physician. 1. Christ does more than forgive. He renews restores. Perhaps you desire now that God should restore unto you the joy of salvation. You are sad about your own fruitlessness. So little peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then, just as spring-sweet spring-comes in time, and the tender herd appears, and Nature puts on her new garment of beauty, rejoicing to have her incense-cup filled again by the hand of the Most High, so you desire that new graces should spring forth. Christ can make you abound with life through the abundant grace which He is waiting to bestow. 2. Christ does more than teach. He will live in you. The fruit is not yours, but Christ's. He is the vine, we are the branches. A closer union with him is what we need. Christ is sometimes called the Great Teacher. So He is! All His teaching is that of the infinite mind. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." What, then, is His first teaching? Believe on me! Then we become one with Him, and our character has life in it. 3. Christ does more even than commence this life. He completes it. He carries it on to perfection. So that we, sinful and weak as we are, are made perfect in every good work. Waste, then, is not to be mourned over only; it is to be restored. The satirist speaks scornfully of evil when seen and lived out. The optimist says all is the best possible in the best of worlds, could we but understand all. The Christian says, No: evil is here, and evil is not of God." And then by the aid of the Holy Ghost he seeks to have the old man crucified with Christ, and to live unto God. May renewal come to us all! May blight and waste give place to life and fruit." This was the hope the prophet held out to Israel. Israel has lost her identity as a nation, she has been scattered among the nations of the world. But there shall be a regathering of Israel. And they shall build the old

wastes. This is the gospel message for you and me today. We have not lived up to our opportunity. We have come short of many blessings, because of our waywardness and indifference to the claims of the gospel upon our time and service. And yet, in the face of all this negligence, our heavenly Father offers us the assurance of reinstatement in His loving care and favor. We may still profit by our loss. I have striven to show that all lives were designed to have a Divine ideal in them; that all wasting of life is traceable; and that wasted lives are reparable only by redemption. It is only through Christ that a wasted life can be restored. What He said to Israel, He says to you. And they shall build the old wastes. –Amen.

And they shall build
The old wastes; Isa. 61: 4.

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was delivered unto him
The book of the prophet

2.

Esaias, And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:17-19. Then again, they should bring hope to us because of the message of hope they inspire

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