

discordant. I see now how it comes about that all of you can aid me in bearing my burden, and yet how, in spite of all your well-meant and needed assistance, I must bear my own burden.

When God wishes to express any great truth,—which is but another way of saying when He wishes to express Himself,—He is compelled as it were to put it in more than one form of words. Truth is spherical, truth is cone like, and the mind must encompass it in order to understand it. Thus it is with the Scriptures. In one passage God gives us one view of a truth, further on another, and yet further a third; and so, by presenting it to us from many points of view, calling our attention to this and that side of it, He makes us at last understand it in its full force and completeness.

Moreover, He uses our experience to advance our understanding. One day reveals what the day before was hidden. There are many things in God's government over us which we did not comprehend once, but which we do comprehend now. There are questions in ethics, there are problems of body and mind, which were once mysterious, but which are now plain. From the tangled skein of our ignorance and misgiving each day's experience has unravelled some strand. With some of you the process is nearly completed, and the mass nearly threaded out.

Now in these two passages the main topic, the central shaft, is burden-bearing. This is the truth which, like a column written all over with hieroglyphs, we are to study. "Bear ye one another's burdens." That is one side of it. That teaches us the duty of sympathy, of tenderness, of mutual helpfulness. But come round to the side of our text, "For every man shall bear his own burden," and you see the other side, and the letters spell a different injunction.

I. This, then, is my first proposition, namely, that every man must bear the

burden of his own sins, both as concerns this life and the next.

The results of sin are strictly individual. It is with the soul as with the body, with the spirit as with the flesh. If you thrust a knife into your arm it does not affect me. You yourself feel the pain; you yourself must endure the agony. I may sympathize, I may pity, I may bandage the gash, but the severed flesh, and the lacerated fibres are yours, and along your nerves nature telegraphs the pain. So it is with the soul. A man who stabs himself with a bad habit, who opens the arteries of his higher life with the lancet of his passions, and drains them of the vital fluid, who inserts his head within the noose of appetite and swings off from the pedestal of his self-control, must endure the suffering, the weakness, and the loss which are the issue of his insane conduct.

Now there is nothing which grips one so tightly, nothing which coils itself around one with so deadly a compression, as remorse. When this feeling gets the fingers of its agony upon a man's soul, death itself is a release and a happy deliverance. I do not suppose that any of you can gauge the pressure of this sensation. It is the law of our nature that we cannot realize what we have not felt. Pain is its own interpreter. There is but one oracle through which agony can express its thoughts: that oracle is itself. To know what remorse is you must have felt remorse. The scarred and blasted tree reveals the hot and withering violence of the lightning, and so the scathed and shattered soul manifests the ruin of sin.

I wonder greatly at the endurance of the human will, which, with agony here, and no hope in the hereafter, bears up under the pressure of its self-incurred curse. Where can a man with this remorse in his bosom flee? Can he escape his own heart? Can he triumph over his own thought? Can he sweep away the impending terror of his own forebodings? If he should take the wings