

MARRED: SO HE MADE IT AGAIN

by F. B. Meyer

Once Pagannini, standing before a great audience, broke string after string in his violin, until only one was left. He held up his violin, and said, "One string and Pagannini."

Now we want one man and God; God working through a man so that the man is the channel. But before God can work by a man, he must be right, and I have to speak now on how God can make a man right, fit for service.

In the preceding address we came to despair. We stood upon the brink of the precipice and looked down into the dark, fearing that we might be castaways. Now I take for my text the words:

"He made it again." Jeremiah 18:4.

What did he make again? Jeremiah was a disappointed man. He thought he could do no more to stay the people from destruction. His heart was breaking. God told him to go down to the potter's house, and there he saw the potter take a piece of clay and place it on a wheel. As he stood there to watch, the potter shaped it: it rose beneath his hand into a fair and lovely shape. But just as it was complete, and it seemed as though nothing more was needed, it crumbled beneath his hand. Some part of it fell upon the wheel, some part upon the ground. Jeremiah thought that the potter would take another piece of clay and make that clay fulfill his plan, but instead he stooped and gathered the broken clay with his hand, picked it from the ground, and kneading it with his hand he placed it once more upon the wheel and began to make that clay again; and presently a vessel as fair as possible stood complete, ready to be taken to the kiln to be baked and made permanent.

Away back in your life God took you and placed you upon the wheel, and for these many years God has sought to make you fair. But I know not why, I cannot tell-God knows-you know-there has come a flaw and break, and you are a piece of broken pottery. Your life is a marred life, your ideal a broken ideal, and all around there lie the littered pieces of the man or the woman that you might have been.

But now what shall you do? God put you in that place for a high purpose, but you have missed your mark. Shall God take another man and give him your wealth, another woman and give her your position? Shall God take another student and put him in your church? Shall God call another body to perform the work your church should do? Not yet, not yet. He might take another piece of clay and make that a vessel, but instead He comes again to seek you. His hand is passing through this audience to find you, that the broken pieces of your life, your marred and spoiled ideal, may be made over again. Clergyman, merchant, lady of fashion, Christian worker, student, singer, - God's hand is feeling for you now. The hand of God is, so to speak, laying hold upon the broken pieces of your marred and spoiled life, and if you will let Him, He will now begin to complete your nature by making it to be what He meant it to be years ago when you were cradled at the foot of the cross.

Why have you failed? Because your life is a failure. You hide it by going to church, by observing the outward routine, by a hearty laugh, by a light, gay air. You live your life amongst your brethren or sisters, but no one knows that deep down in your soul you are certain that you are a failure, that you are spoiled,

that you want things you do not obtain, that you long for a goodness you never realize, that you reach out for a sweetness and purity and strength that never comes. You know that your life has fallen beneath God's plan. You are ready to confess it. Why is it so? Is it because God has failed?

See that mother bending over the cradle where her firstborn babe lies. See how a smile lights up her face as she thinks she catches the plaudits which are to welcome his success in coming years. But no woman ever cherished for her babe visions half so fair as your God has for you. He hates nothing that He has made, and with an equal love He wants to do

HIS BEST FOR EACH.

What then is the cause? Is it that He has made a mistake in your life? You think so. If instead of being a poor man you had been rich, if instead of being a lone woman you had had one to call you wife, and little children to clutch your dress and call you mother; if instead of being tied to the office-stool you had been a minister or missionary, you think that you would have been a better, a sweeter character. But I want you to understand that God chose for you your lot in life out of myriads that were open to Him, because just where you are you might realize your noblest possibilities. Otherwise God would have made you different from what you are. But your soul, born into His kingdom, was a matter of care and thought to Him, how best He might nurture you; and He chose your lot with its irritations, its trials, its difficulties, all the agony that eats out your nature. Though men and women do not guess it, He chose it just as it is, because in it, if you will let Him, He can realize the fairest life within your reach.

Where is the failure? Look. I think I have the wheel before me. My foot is working the treadle. It is revolving rapidly, horizontally as you know. I have placed it on the clay. I begin to manipulate it. It rises beneath my hand till I come to one certain point where, either through some flaw in the clay, a bubble or a fault, it resists me. Leaving that point, I put my hand around again, and in some other direction endeavor to secure my purpose, and then come back to that one point, but again I meet that obstruction that thwarts me. The genius of my brain as an artist is complete; the power of my hand to manipulate is unrivaled; it is *the clay* that thwarts me, until presently, because I have been frustrated again and again, the work is a marred, spoiled thing.

Now is not that true of you?

The one trouble of my life, years ago, was just this about which I am speaking now. God was dealing with me. I suppose He wanted to make me a vessel fit for His use. But there was one point in my life where I fought God as the clay fights the hand of the potter. I fought God, I will not say for how long. God help me! the only benefit that I can get now out of those years the cankerworm has eaten, is to discover the secret in other lives while they too are standing still, and then to take them to the Christ to whom I went myself, and to encourage them to hope that He who years ago took up a spoiled and marred life and made a little of it, will take other men and women and will find out where they have thwarted Him; and finding it out, will touch them there, and as they yield to Him they will be made again.

Now what is the point in your life where you obstruct God? Allow me to search you.

WHERE IS IT?

People come to me and speak of the different points in which they have thwarted God. A man came to me one day and said that when I was in a certain convention I asked all those who wanted to be wholly

for God to stand up. He refused to stand, and for months his will rose up and said, "Who is this man that I should stand up when he bids me?"

For months he fought this feeling, until not long ago he came to me and said, "Come and pray! I want to confess that I have been fighting the will of God for months, and I am wretched. Help me to get peace."

I was once staying with another man, a pastor. I had said nothing about smoking-I never do single out sins-I had not alluded to the habit; but one day we were walking along a street that led over a river, and to my surprise as we got to the apex of the bridge he took his tobacco-pouch and pipe and threw them over, and said, "There, I have settled that."

Then, turning to me, he said: "I know, Mr. Meyer, you have said nothing about it; but for the last few months God has been asking me to set a new example to my young men, and I said, 'Why should not I do as I like, and they as they like? God was searching me, and I was fighting Him; but it is all settled now, sir, it is all done now.'"

A bright young girl, at the end of one of my addresses, was waiting about, and I said to her:

"Come, my girl, I am quite sure that you have got nothing to see me about."

"O," she said, "I have, sir. I remember that three or four years ago, when I was a girl at school, one of my companions asked me to go out and get some candy for her. I got it, but I kept back half the money for myself. That sin has been working in my mind. It seems as if God keeps saying, 'Confess, confess, restore'; but, sir, I have been fighting it for the last month or two. It looks so stupid to do a little thing like that."

I said, "My dear child, nothing is stupid that is going to please God and put you right with His will."

A man came to me and said, "I cannot understand it, sir, but it seems as if God is blotted out of my life. I used to be so happy."

I said, "How is it?"

Said he, "I think it has to do with my treatment of my brother. He served me cruelly over my father's will, and I said I would never forgive him. I am sorry I said it, but he has been going from bad to worse, has lost his wife and child, and is now on a bed of death, and I cannot go to him because I said I never would."

I said, "My friend, it is better to break a bad vow than keep it. Go."

He went, and the smile of God met him just there.

Sixteen years ago I was a minister in a Midland town in England, not at all happy, doing my work for the pay I got, but holding a good position amongst my fellows. Hudson Taylor and two young students came into my life. I watched them. They had something I had not. Those young men stood there in all their strength and joy. I said to Charles Studd, "What is the difference between you and me? You seem so happy, and I somehow am in the trough of the wave."

He replied, "There is nothing that I have got which you may not have, Mr. Meyer."

But I asked, "How am I to get it?"

"Well," he said, "have you given yourself right up to God?"

I winced. I knew that if it came to that, there was a point where I had been fighting my deepest convictions for months. I had lived away from it, but when I came to the Lord's table and handed out the bread and wine, then it met me; or when I came to a convention or meeting of holy people, something stopped me as I remembered this. It was the one point where my will was entrenched. I thought I would do something with Christ that night which would settle it one way or the other, and I met Christ. You will forgive a man who owes everything to one night in his life if to help other men he opens his heart for a moment. I knelt in my room and gave Christ the ring of my will with the keys on it, but kept one little key back, the key of a closet in my heart, in one back story in my heart. He said to me:

"Are they all here?"

And I said, "All but one."

"What is that?" said He.

"It is the key of a little cupboard," said I, "in which I have got something which Thou needest not interfere with, but it is mine."

Then, as He put the keys back into my hand, and seemed to be gliding away to the door, He said:

"My child, if you cannot trust Me with all, you do not trust Me at all."

I cried, "Stop," and He seemed to come back; and holding the little key in my hand, in thought I said:

"I cannot give it, but if Thou wilt take it Thou shalt have it."

He took it, and within a month from that time He had cleared out that little cupboard of things which had been there for months. I knew He would.

May I add one word more? Three years ago I met the thing I gave up that night, and as I met it I could not imagine myself being such a fool as nearly to have sold my birthright for that mess of pottage.

I looked up into the face of Christ and said, "Now I am thine." It seemed as if that was the beginning of a new ministry. The Lord got me on His wheel again, and He made me again, and He has been making me again ever since. I learned that night to say "yes," and I have tried to say "yes" ever since.

Now my friend, you say to me, "It is quite true, sir; my life is marred. But I am getting to be an old man. Do you think there is any hope for me?"

My text says: "He made it again."

Adelaide Proctor says, at the end of one of her verses, that we always may be what we might have been. In a sense that is not true. You and I never can recall the past, and yet-and yet Jesus has a wonderful knack of making men again.

There was Jacob, the supplanter, for instance. He met him again at the ford of Jabbok, and he was made into Israel, a prince of God. There was Peter, and He made him again so that on the day of Pentecost he became the means of the Holy Ghost's advent to the world. And he made again John Mark who went back before a touch of seasickness to his mother, but Paul said of him after, "Bring him, for he is profitable." He will make you again.

Canon Wilberforce told me that he had his likeness painted by the great artist Herkomer, who told him the following story. Herkomer was born in the Black Forest, his father a simple woodchopper. When the artist rose to name and fame in London, and built his studio at Bushey, his first thought was to have the old man come and spend the rest of his years with him. He came, and was very fond of molding clay. All day he made things out of clay, but as the years passed he thought his hand would lose its cunning. He often went upstairs at night to his room with the sad heart of an old man who thinks his best days are gone by. Herkomer's quick eyes of love detected this, and when his father was safe asleep his gifted son would come down stairs and take in hand the pieces of clay which his old father had left, with the evidences of defect and failure; and with his own wonderful touch he would make them as fair as they could be made by human hand. When the old man came down in the morning, and took up the work he had left all spoiled the night before, and held it up before the light, he would say, rubbing his hands, "I can do it as well as ever I did."

Is not that just what God Almighty is going to do with you? You are bearing the marks of failure just because you have been resisting Him and fighting Him. But, ah! my Lord comes with those pierced hands, and says, "Will you not yield to me? Only yield, and I will make you again."

There is a Pentecost for us all, but we must begin at the beginning. There must be the yielding.

Young girls who have come out of beautiful homes, the children of luxury, I tell you that all the exterior beauty of your life is only a faint adumbration and shadow of the infinite sweetness and grace of the life of Pentecost. Live in the promised land, men and women, you who have been seeking in the outside, in circumstances and things and people, your bliss.

YOU HAVE MISSED IT

- you always will that way. It is inside. It is in the Holy Ghost. It is in Christ. Heaven is there. It is there for all. But believe me, you cannot get it unless you take the preparatory step. Therefore you must get alone as I did sixteen years ago; you must kneel down before Christ and say:

"Christ, I give Thee my self, my will. With my will I yield to Thee. Thou art the Potter; I am the clay. Impose Thy will upon me."

And mind you, Christ will say to you, "What about this?" and if you can look up and say; "Yes, that is Thine." He will go forward and make you beautiful and happy. But if you refuse, you will stop there, you will be dwarfed, you will thwart Christ.

At Keswick, a little village in the Cumberland Hills, where we meet once a year to talk about these things, if you go out at ten o'clock, at eleven o'clock, at twelve o'clock, at one o'clock, you will see lights burning. My heart has often gone up in prayer because I know that every light means a Jabbok, and that at those places souls are yielding to God. At Northfield also a brother clergyman said to me, "Mr. Meyer, the work

has not been done in the auditorium, but it has been done in the woods at night where we have gone to settle it with God."

Remember this. When I gave myself to God that night, the devil said, "Don't do it! If you let God have an inch, He will want an ell. If you yield in one thing you will have to yield in everything, and there is no knowing what you may not come to."

At first I thought there was something in it. Then I remembered my daughter, who was a little willful then, and loved her own way. I thought to myself as I knelt, "Supposing that she were to come and say - 'Father, from tonight I am going to put my life into your hand; do with it what you will.' Would I call her mother to my side and say: 'Here is a chance to torment her. What would mortify her? What color dress does she hate? What companion does she detest? What method of spending her life does she abhor? Tell me, and I will put her through them all.' "

I knew I would not say that. I knew I would say to my wife, "Our child is going to follow our will from now. Do you know of anything that is hurting her?"

"Yes; so and so."

"Does she love it much?"

"Yes."

"Ah! she must give it up, but we will make it as easy for her as we can. We must take from her the things that are hurting her, but we will give her everything that will make her life one long summer day of bliss."

God will say that to you. He only takes that one thing away because it will hurt you. But oh! He will give, and give, and give! You have no idea what God will do for you. Say: "I am willing." But let me make! confession: I did not say that myself. I said, "I am not willing, O God, but I am willing to be made willing."

God help you to make the same prayer!