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THE WEEKLY SERMON
"Knowing and Not Doing"
 Preached March 18, 1906, in Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, by the Pastor, J. ROSS STEVENSON, D.D.

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"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
 —James IV. 17.
 Education alone will not make a man a saint. There may be as much evil connected with inertia as with ignorance. It is not necessary to be a Christian to believe that there is sin in the world. That the man who transgresses the law of God is a sinner is the truest thing we can say about him. But how a person of understanding who has been well educated; who knows the difference between right and wrong, and is generally respected, can be a sinner, is not so evident. We know, however, that sin is not confined to the lower strata of society. Take Christ's spiritual interpretation of the Ten Commandments: take His obedience to the law as our standard of conduct, and we can see that there is not a single commandment which we ourselves have not broken. But if a man still doubts his sinfulness, let him contemplate his failures. He knows what he ought to do, but he does not do it. "What follows? That he is no worse than most people? That is no worse than admitted. That if he had his life to live over again, he might do better? That may be questioned. James, the practical man of plain speech, tells us that such a one is a sinner. According to the test which he applies, each one of us is brought under condemnation. The assertion of our text is very specific. It does not contemplate mankind en masse, but as individuals. To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Let us each one take these words to himself, and if we do, I believe that we shall find here a personal confession, a personal confession, and a personal conviction.

The personal confession:—I know to do good. This is not a general platitude to the effect that it is always right to do good. It is specific—I know what is good or right for me to do.
 I must not, however, admit that even in a law of Bible priviledges, there are many who do not know and who need to be enlightened? There are, to be sure, here in our own country, great throngs of people who should have Christian instruction. Many have come from lands where the system of religion to which they were accustomed, has degraded, rather than developed, their souls, and they have practically no religious life at all, and stand in desperate need of the gospel. With many others, the training they received in their youth; the efforts of the Church on their behalf, have apparently failed, and they are living in darkness. They do not use the light they have to get more light, and we may say that they know to do some good, which, however, is not done. In most of our congregations it would surprise us to discover that a small amount of real vital, energizing knowledge, there is, and this because so many of us have a convenient way of deflecting the knowledge which does not please us. There are Christians whose character and conduct may be commendable in many respects, but who have strangely perverted notions as to some specific virtues or given lines of duty. Goethe has said if a great man has a dark place in his mind, it is very dark. Even in the minds of good people, there may be dark places into which the truth has not been allowed to enter. Whitfield maintained that the rum trade was essential to the prosperity of America. John Newton testified that he enjoyed sweet seasons with God whilst he was engaged in the slave trade. But a man's partiality blinds him, and he does not see the light which does not please us. There are Christians whose character and conduct may be commendable in many respects, but who have strangely perverted notions as to some specific virtues or given lines of duty. Goethe has said if a great man has a dark place in his mind, it is very dark. Even in the minds of good people, there may be dark places into which the truth has not been allowed to enter. Whitfield maintained that the rum trade was essential to the prosperity of America. John Newton testified that he enjoyed sweet seasons with God whilst he was engaged in the slave trade. But a man's partiality blinds him, and he does not see the light which does not please us.

2. But these admissions do not contradict what I have already asserted, that each one of us knows to do good. The knowledge may be incomplete; it may need reinforcement, but it is there if, in any sense, we can claim to be Christians, and I am speaking only to those who profess to have some knowledge of the truth. You and I accept Christ as God's supreme revelation to man as to what we ought to be and do. We believe in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth, and to build us up in character. Most of us have been subject all our lives to spiritual influences, and we recognize the voice of God within; conscience the clear witness of duty. We have been taught to pray for divine aid, and in every time of doubt, the way can be made clear to us. So that if we desire to do good, and wish to know what that good is, it can be definitely ascertained. It is not the good which other people ought to do; we are all experts in that kind of knowledge. But it is the good which I should do; which you should do. Will you say to me I would love to be what I ought to be, and to follow in the straight line of duty, but I do not know how? He that willeth to do God's will, shall know the teaching. Ask God for light, and you will have it. The Personal Confession:—I do it not.

1. It is not that we despise the good, and ruthlessly reject it. Let it be supposed that we love what is right and true, and are able to talk about it intelligently and commend it forcibly to others. There are many in this city to-day who prefer

darkness to light because their deeds are evil, and spurn the gospel, and are living without hope in the world. But our presence here indicates that we have some appreciation of what is unearthly, unseen and eternal.
 It is not that we do nothing good or that there is no good at all in anything we do. There would not be imputed to a man any self-righteousness if he were to claim for himself that he is not as bad as some people whom he knows, and that he does more good than the average man. People may remonstrate with him because he does so much in the name of Christ. The plea may be urged upon him that because of his health; on account of his business interests; on account of his social obligations, he is doing more than can be reasonably expected of him, and that he is not to be placed upon others. But the humble Christian never takes such an attitude. Indeed, knowing himself, the secret desires of his heart; the good which he has resisted; as he cannot know what is in others, he is bound to feel with Bunyan: "Everyone has a better heart than I have." As good a saint has expressed it: "God has given no one any power of knowing the true greatness of any sin but his own, and therefore the greatest sinner that anyone knows is himself." It was not with any ferred humility that the great Apostle called himself the chief of sinners.

3. Therefore, to say anything of the actual transgressions of the law of God which we can discern in our hearts and lives, you and I can see as no one else can see, the good that has been left undone. Even a man like Andrew A. Ponnar was compelled to say as he concluded one year in his prison: "This year's omissions have distressed me more than anything." All of us must adopt the confession of the Prayer Book: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done." We think of the gentle words we might have spoken; of the service we might have rendered. We have not others to do to us. Someone has said: "The real ghosts of human life are unwritten letters and unpaid visits." Not without reason the Lord's Prayer says, "Forgive us our debts—for these constitute the largest proportion of our sins. With too many of us the superior has been set aside for the inferior; the subordinate has thrust out the supreme. James is speaking of the relation of humility and entire dependence in which the creature should stand to the Creator. "Go to now ye that say to-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." In other words, we ought to spend each day as in the light of eternity, knowing that our time on earth is short. We believe that; are we doing it? It has been remarked, as a proposition which each man believes to be true of everyone except himself. Not that anyone seriously believes that he himself will be exempt from death; but each of us habitually thinks and acts as if in his case, death were such an indefinite distance away that practically it need not be taken account of, at any rate, at present. Hence, knowing to do good, we do it not, because in our self-confidence and independence we have a mistaken view of life; a wrong perspective. James also intimates in a negative way what our attitude should be to those about us: We are to avoid all harsh judgment and all censorious speech, and fulfill the law of love. In every instance in so far as our conduct relates to others, we are to do the unselfish, Christ-like thing. We concede that; but can any man claim that he is as charitable, as gentle, as patient towards others as he ought to be, and will always wish that he had a pen? We may wish over these omissions with such mild terms as expediency, modesty, forgetfulness, over-occupation, or, at the worst, failure, whereas we know that they may be traced to sloth, selfishness, cowardice, sin—I know to do good I do it not. What follows?
 I am a sinner in the sight of God, and I must fasten myself upon each one of us: I am a sinner.
 1. The word which James uses for sin here means, literally, to miss the mark; to come short of the standard. God sets before us a standard of conduct; a standard which we recognize as right, and adopt for ourselves. But we do not come up to it. Scripture calls this sin, and James reminds us that any omission of duty is charged against us as sin. It is just as really disobedience to God as when a man transgresses the law, and we employ it for illegitimate speculation, nor squander it; he simply did nothing. What did Jesus say? "Thou wicked and slothful servant!" There are men to-day who stand aside from an active career, either on the plea that they have already done what can be expected of them, or they have no gifts; no calling, no opportunities. Whatever the explanation, they are nevertheless slothful and guilty. Or a man may excuse himself, on the ground that he is exceedingly busy. There are obligations of a secular character which he is bound to meet; he has his family to care for; his business to attend to; let others be free to encumbered seize the opportunity. This is what the man said who was invited to the feast: I have a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it. And the Master said of him and of all who were like him: "Not one of those who were bidden shall taste of my supper."
 Or some one may say: I am not prepared to take life so seriously just yet. I expect in time to devote myself to what is right, but I must enjoy the pleasures of the world for a season. The foolish virgin brought no oil with her except what they had in their lamps, and was shut out when she tried to enter.

At mid-night there was a sudden cry: Behold, the bridegroom cometh! And the foolish ones who had frittered away their opportunities had no oil, and whilst they went in search for some, the door was shut and they could not enter in.
 3. Not only is such an inexcusable, it involves an increasing measure of guilt. According to Christ's own gracious words, a sin of ignorance calls for leniency, although we say in these days that ignorance is no excuse for crime. A sin against light, against love, against opportunity, demands severity. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself; neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, for unto whom such is given, of him shall much be required. And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Does this not teach us the great danger there is in trifling with duty; the great necessity there is of promptly obeying each dictate of conscience? That we should always be even what we see, people urge upon us, no one will maintain, but that we should invariably do what conscience dictates, no man can dispute.
 The lesson of life when read aright is: that we imperatively need Christ. The great Apostle Paul, when he would do good, found evil present in his mind. When he discovered the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin; when he contemplated all the struggle and defeat of the conflict, he cried out: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall deliver me? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Without Him no one has ever attained to his ideal of character or of conduct; but with Him you can do all things.

Winter Estimates Shaw
 "It is difficult," says William Winter, in one of his characteristic outbursts, "to think with patience or to write with tolerance of the plays of Mr. George Bernard Shaw—for, to a thoughtful mind, perceptive of their latent impurity, and mischievous perversity, they are a source of mingled irritation and disgust."
 "Mr. Shaw is a clever Irishman, and like most Irishmen, revolutionary in spirit and happy in a grievance against society. He has had experience as a journalist. His style is clear and precise, and his writings show some inventive skill combined with some vigor of coarse, rancid animal vitality. Those writings, however, do not reveal a particle, either of genius, refinement, or grace. On the contrary, they show an unbalanced mind, a shallow nature, unsound, wavering or wrong principles, prodigious vanity and a morbid consciousness of insensate conceit. Cursed with the desire to impress people as 'brilliant,' this dramatist succeeds only in being importunately smart."
 "Mr. Shaw's aim is to turn everything upside down and inside out; to exploit paradox; to shine in pert epigram. In this latter particular he is sometimes fortunate—just as occasionally, a blind hog will root up a good acorn, because he cannot help it. But throughout his plays, there is a pervasive spirit of insincerity, and in some of them (notably in 'Candida') there is a subtle taint of disease—a kind of miasma—that can scarcely be distinguished from downright immorality. Few persons so intrinsically disgusting as the sickly, sexless, hysterical thing that he calls 'a poet' in 'Candida' have ever made their way on the stage; while the woman 'Candida' herself, who listens to this snipe and allows his presence, is a gross libel upon decent, self-respecting womanhood."
 "Another of his plays, now current, 'Man and Superman' by name, is one long rignarole of jaundiced satire, flamboyant paradox and cheap cynicism."
 "A recent deliverance of this author, as to parents and children, sufficiently indicates the fiber of his intellect and the quality of his moral nature. Nobody lives with children, he said, except people who are obliged to do so, and it would be well that places of refuge should be provided, so that children might be rescued from the demoralizing influence of home."
 "In brief, Mr. Shaw's purpose is to attract attention, and this purpose he has, in a measure, accomplished, by paradox of speech and by a topsyturvy morality that seems to mean something to 'qualified old maids and disappointed widows'—to dissatisfied, discontented women in general."

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 ARRIVALS
 60 From Toronto..... 5.00 a.m.
 19 From Peterboro..... 8.00 a.m.
 22 From Haliburton..... 8.55 a.m.
 1 From Port Hope..... 9.10 a.m.
 0 From Cobocook..... 10.10 a.m.
 22 From Toronto..... 10.50 a.m.
 35 From Port Hope..... 2.05 p.m.
 2 From I. B. & O. Jct..... 5.45 p.m.
 23 From Port Hope..... 6.28 p.m.
 54 From Whiteby..... 7.30 p.m.
 24 From Toronto..... 8.05 p.m.
 56 From Whiteby..... 8.45 p.m.
 18 From Toronto..... 9.40 p.m.
 1 From Belleville..... 9.45 p.m.
 DEPARTURES
 34 For Port Hope..... 6.00 a.m.
 51 For Toronto..... 6.80 a.m.
 0 For Belleville..... 7.20 a.m.
 21 For Toronto..... 9.15 a.m.
 2 For Port Hope..... 10.55 a.m.
 3 For I. B. & O. Jct..... 11.00 a.m.
 57 For Whiteby..... 11.05 a.m.
 27 For Toronto..... 12.05 p.m.
 38 For Haliburton..... 2.40 p.m.
 33 For Toronto..... 6.28 p.m.
 31 For Cobocook..... 6.55 p.m.
 15 For Peterboro..... 9.45 a.m.
 28 For Toronto..... 9.55 p.m.

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