Holy Ground

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Holy Ground

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exo. 3:5).

Plymouth Rock and Independence Hall are holy ground to every patriotic American heart. Gettysburg, Antietam, and Fredericksburg are holy ground to every man

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to the cross-marked graves where the bodies of their precious boys sleep amid the hush and beauty of the green fields and flowers. But do we realize that this Word of God to Moses that "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"? That the daily, prosaic, seemingly hum-drum round of our every-day life and toil is holy ground if we would only see it as God sees it and accept it from His hand, as the holy place where He is ready to work out His great purpose for our humble lives?

The Holy Ground of Consecration

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of consecration.

Most of us believe that God needs consecrated men in the ministry, in the foreign mission fields, and in all forms of Christian work. But how many of us realize that the place whereon we stand in our daily, work-a-day life is holy ground, and that there is no limit to the blessedness and power with which God will use consecrated bankers, lawyers, physicians, clerks, mechanics and other Christian laymen who give themselves to Him in consecration, in the holy ground of their everyday life.

Nat's Sand Pile

Chatting one day with a dear Christian friend he said to me, "Have you ever heard about Nat's sand-pile?" When I answered in the negative he told me this story. Nat was a beloved friend of ours. He was a building contractor. It so happened that in his native city down by the river bank was a huge sand pile. But Nat had a vision about this sand pile. He saw that every truck load he sold would bring him a dollar. And when the sand pile was gone the levelled ground would make a fine site for a business block. So Nat bought the sand pile. When the news got abroad, many of his friends were smiling at the idea of his buying a worthless sand pile. But soon Nat's vision began to come true. Week after week he sold sand and levelled off the ground. Bye-and-bye the sand was all sold; the ground was levelled off; a handsome business block was built on the site. Before the year was

over, a good part of the wholesale trade of the city had moved into that block, and soon after he sold out making thousands of dollars in the operation.

Friend, your life may be obscure, untalented, and as worthless in your sight as that sand pile. But if you will treat the place in everyday life whereon you stand as holy ground, and give that life to God in consecration, God will make of it a beautiful structure enduring for His glory through all time and eternity.

The Holy Ground of God's Call

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of God's call.

Most of us when we picture God's call, think of something dramatic, revolutionary, and startling. The scene on the road to Damascus at once comes up. We see the great light in the sky; we hear the voice from heaven; we picture the revolutionizing effect of it all upon the great apostle to the Gentiles. But we forget the great number of men to whom God's call came when they stood upon the holy ground of their every-day life and service. God's call came to Samuel when he ministered in the daily round of the temple; it came to David in the sheep fold; it came to Moses after forty years in the back of the desert; it came to some of the disciples as they were mending and casting their nets. In all these cases the call came to them as they stood upon the holy ground of their daily duties.

There comes back to me an experience of my early manhood days. My health was utterly broken. All my own plans were crushed. As yet I had found none of God's. One day I was sitting at my table studying the Word of God. A great blessing came into my

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this to others as you have given it to me." I arose from my chair and walked down stairs. My sister handed me my morning mail. The first letter I opened was from the secretary of a Young Men's Christian Association across the river from the little home town in eastern Pennsylvania where I lived. It ran like this: "Dear

Brother—Last night we decided to start a Bible Class. We arose from our knees after a half hour's prayer, impressed that you were the man we needed. Will you come over and teach this class for us?" It seemed but a small thing, but it looked to me like God's holy ground of service. That night I went and taught a Bible Class of five big hearted railroad men. God gave great blessing to my own soul, and seemed to help these dear men. I taught that Bible Class as faithfully as I knew for a period of three years. Then came another class, and another. At the end of three years I was teaching 10 Bible classes, and had found my life work. The place of daily service whereon I had been standing proved to be holy ground, and I had found the joy of God's will for my life.

Let us then heed this great truth that God's call always has come, and always will come, to men who are standing on the holy ground of every day faithful service. If He wants us elsewhere He will make it plain. But until He does so, stay where you are and count it holy ground whereon thou standest.

The Holy Ground of Patience

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of patience.

The literal meaning of the verb "to be patient" is "to stay under." It is a striking word picture. We sing—

> *Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way;*
> *Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.*

But when the Potter puts His hand on the clay, the clay proceeds to get out from under the Potter's wheel instead of staying under the same. To stay under all that God permits to come upon you, whether of suffering, tribulation, or affliction while He works out His purpose of Christ-likeness in you, that makes the place whereon thou standest to be the holy ground of patience.

How true this was of Moses. There in that barren, lonely spot, under the fiery rays of a desert sun, day after day, year after year, God kept His great servant in the place of patience. That is, he "stayed under" the hand of God amid all the monotony, desolation, and isolation of that 40 years of tremendous test and trial. Forty years of training and patience for forty years of service. A year of patience for every year of leadership! And out of it the hot-headed, hasty young Egyptian killer came forth an iron-willed, stedfast, tender-hearted, marvelous leader with the very patience of God Himself. For none other would have sufficed to lead this raw, undisciplined, rebellious, unbelieving, idolatrous host of Israelites through all those weary years of wandering which their own sinfulness had brought upon them, yet which he

shared with them as though he himself were responsible with them for the tragedy of it all.

Much of our prayer life consists in beseeching God to surround us with a new set of circumstances. Instead of that we should pray for grace to stay under the present circumstances while He works out in us His purpose of Christ-likeness. God does not need a new set of circumstances to make you Christ-like. All He needs is for you to "stay under" the old set with which He has environed your life. I question if there is any

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present conditions.

A young man came into my room one day for a conference. He said he had been praying earnestly to God to make an important change in his environment, but God had failed to do so. So his faith had been much shaken. I suggested that God might have a purpose in keeping him where he was, and that it might be well to submit it all to Him and stay under His hand while He worked out His great purpose. We got down upon our knees together and I prayed that he might make such a committal. I waited a moment to hear it, but when I looked up he was standing with his hand on the door knob ready to go out. He had no intention nor desire to stay under God's hand, but was ready to get out. We pray to God to change our environment, but when God puts His hand upon us to change us instead of staying under that hand we reach for the door to get out. Of course if God Himself changes our circumstances it is different. But until He does so, it is well for us to stay under our present environment, realizing that the place whereon we stand is the holy ground of patience for us.

The Holy Ground of Suffering

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of suffering.

"For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." I Peter 4:1-2.

This is a striking text. It clearly teaches that the children of God, through their experiences of suffering, pass from doing the lusts of the flesh into the blessed place of living in the will of God. Thus the place of suffering where we stand becomes the holy ground of submission to the will of God.

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… passing through it. But as the years go by, and … and enriched through suffering, we begin to … suffering is whereon we stand.

I once heard a dear Christian man tell this story. He had a beloved son. He was one of those rare personalities, winsome, loveable and outstanding in the beauty and strength of character. The young man was taken to a hospital for an operation. He came through all right and seemed to be convalescing rapidly. His father had a long and important railroad journey to take, but he hesitated to leave his sick boy. The latter, however, wished him to go, telling him that it was all right, and as the father leaned over him to say goodbye, the lad kissed him and bade him God speed. Three or four days brought the father back from the long journey. He hastened to the first telephone booth, picked up the phone and inquired

at the hospital how his boy was. The answer came back like a bolt from a clear sky: "He is dead." A spasm of pain swept over the father's face as he uttered these words, and uncovered the agony of his soul after a lapse of six years. But a new light was in his eye, and a new joy in his voice as he told me how he had found the blessed will of God for his life, and what unspeakable joy he was finding in doing that precious will. The suffering had done its work. It was the holy ground of God's will for him.

Back to me comes the recollection of years of suffering in my own life. I was called home from college by the death of my father. There fell upon me the care of a paralyzed mother, seven children, and thousands of dollars of debt. It was the place of a loving duty, and I unhesitatingly stepped into it. But what years of suffering they were! I was only a boy and the burden was great. Year after year passed by, and how dark they were as I look back upon them now. At last the awful debts were paid; my brother was a successful young business man, my sisters were happily married; and my beloved mother was "absent from the body and present with the Lord." I myself was physically crushed. The path of suffering had been a thorny one, and the way seemed hard and long. Now that the years have fled and "I trace the rainbow through the rain," those years of suffering have proved to be the holiest ground upon which my feet have ever trodden. For in them, and because of them, I passed out from the will of the flesh concerning my own life into the precious place of the will of God. I learned obedience through the things which I had suffered. All that I passed through I needed,

nor would I recall one day of it now, as I think of the unspeakable blessing it has brought to my life.

What do you think was the holiest ground upon which the feet of our blessed Lord trod after His resurrection glory came to Him? I am sure it was under the gnarled olive trees of Gethsemane where He sweat blood in coming into the perfect will of God; and the hill of Calvary, where He poured out the crimson tide of His life for you and me when "He loved us and gave Himself for us." And when you and I come back in our glorified bodies to revisit these earthly scenes, I am sure the holiest ground upon which our feet shall tread will be the places where we have suffered.

The Holy Ground of Service

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of service.

In my college days there was a boy in the class above me whom we called Tom. He was quiet, and somewhat reserved, but was able, scholarly, and withal popular among the boys. We all thought that he would make good when he went out into the world. Graduation day came and with it the breaking of college ties, and the parting of college friends. Thirty-five years rolled by. Then one day I heard that our old college-mate, whose full name was Thomas Woodrow Wilson, was to speak in this city. I went down to the great hall to hear him. There I found a splendid audience of 4000 Christian men gathered

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greeted him, and we had a pleasant chat about the old college days. He went back to the White House, and I wended my way down to a little two-room office on the tenth floor of a city skyscraper. I sat there thinking of my old college friend. He was at the zenith of his fame. The eyes, not only of the country, but of all the world were centered upon him. My own life was quiet, obscure, hidden away in a little corner whence I was sending out over the world simple devotional messages from the Lord. Yet do you know, that as I looked into my own heart, I could not find one atom of envy toward my distinguished fellow-collegian, nor of covetousness for his high position. Do you ask why? Simply because I had found the humble place in which my lot was cast to be God's holy ground of service, and that was the joy of all

life to me. Cherish in your thoughts and incarnate in your life this wonderful sentence of Hudson Taylor—

"*Be God's man;*
In God's place,
Doing God's work;
In God's way."

The Holy Ground of Soul-Winning

The place whereon thou standest is the holy ground of soul-winning.

We say there are yet four months to the harvest. We postpone our soul winning to some indefinite future, or some time of special services in our churches. But Christ says that the fields are white to the harvest. He points us to the immediate present, right at our hand. He calls upon us to buy up the opportunity, to redeem the time which is every day at our doors. "Today" is the ever present "now" of soul-winning and is the only holy ground upon which our feet do stand.

One night in a Canadian town a young man arose in a city mission and gave this remarkable testimony. He said he was a passenger on the ill-fated Titanic when that great ship went down. He was thrown into the water in the darkness and managed to scramble to a piece of wreckage, where he held fast. By and by a man drifted near to him who was holding to a similar bit of wreckage. As he came near he called across the water to the other man, "Young man, are you saved?" The young man replied, "No, sir." Back came the words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Then the speaker drifted away into the darkness. By-and-by through some strange happening, not a chance, the stranger drifted within hailing distance of the young man, and called out over the water again, "Young man, are you saved now?" Again the young man replied, "No, sir." Again the voice came back, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Then a wave swept over the speaker, broke his grasp, and he went

down to death in a watery grave. "And then," said the young man, "with two miles of sea underneath me, I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved." Then, with intense earnestness, this young man added this closing sentence, "I'm John Harper's last convert."

Truly that was making the last moments of life the holy ground of soul-winning. For this momentous work of soul-winning there is no other time but now; there is no other holy ground but the present, upon which our feet can stand.

"Put Off Thy Shoes from Off Thy Feet"

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet."

What does that mean? Simply this. Cease treating the daily round of your life as a common thing. It is holy ground. Every day is aflame with the presence of God, even though your blinded eyes fail to recognize it. Every golden hour is a tiny square in the mosaic of God's beautiful pattern for your life. Every opportunity is a holy chance to win a soul from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Every distress and necessity is but a new lesson in the matchless school of patience, teaching you how to "stay under" the Hand of the skilled Potter who is fashioning you as a vessel of honor and glory for all eternity. Every pang of suffering is a golden milestone which marks your progress from the doing of the desires of the flesh, into the broad and boundless place of the will of God, whose length, breadth, height, and depth it will take all time to reveal, and all eternity to fulfill to its uttermost.