

基督 THE CARPENTER”

(Mark 6:3)

的 s not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him(Mark 6:3).

Jesus had returned to His home village of Nazareth. He had gone to the synagogue on the Sabbath and was allowed to teach there. When he had completed his message, his fellow villagers, who had known him from his early life, were astonished. In fact, the text literally says that they were 杜 uch struck. They grew up and lived in the same town, and they reacted against what he was saying because they couldn't explain it. In light of this quandary, they registered the question found at the beginning of verse 3. "Is not this the carpenter?" A definite article appears before the word 田 arpenlerin the text, 的 s not this *the* carpenter? So apparently He was, for a period of time, "the" village carpenter.

It is interesting to note that they examined Him carefully at a time when they were looking for something to criticize yet they couldn't find any fault in his character. They could not fault his character, so they attacked his trade. Their only complaint had to do with his vocation. Focus your thoughts upon the question, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" This question forms the basis for this message.

The entire history of eighteen years of Jesus' life (that is, what little we know) is given us in one word. Thank God for that word. Someone said that this episode in the temple, at twelve years of age, was the one flower that protruded through a crack of the otherwise walled garden of the oblivion and isolation of His first thirty years of life. Jesus apparently spent six times longer being a carpenter than He did being a preacher. This fact offends some people. I was reading, just this last week, one of the early church fathers who didn't 准 find the idea to his liking so he translated this word in a quite different way. However, there is no valid way to get around the fact that Jesus did menial work. The early church leader missed the whole content of the incarnation of Christ. Jesus was a teacher, a healer, a leader, but before all of that, He was a carpenter.

I. JESUS ENTERED THE POSITION OF A CARPENTER

First, Jesus *entered the position* of a carpenter. He entered into a carpenter's home. For at least eighteen years He engaged in a carpenter's habits. He nestled up close to a carpenter's heart for probably sixteen years of His earthly life. Strong tradition tells us that Joseph died when Jesus was about sixteen. Some people seem to think that the time Jesus spent in those associations and in the role of a carpenter was lost time but it wasn't. In fact, the more you ponder this truth, the more you see that this had to be a calculation from all eternity past. One finds it hard to think that there could have been any other way Jesus could have gained humanly what He needed to gain to go about the business He was about.

Would you consider the counteractions or the contradictions that Jesus brought to man's usual views merely by entering the position of a carpenter? What kind of Messiah were the Jews expecting? A king or a conqueror? They were expecting a soldier-conqueror who would come marching into Jerusalem in great pomp and ceremony to break the yoke of Roman oppression and establish Israel as a global power. But instead He came as a lowly, callous-handed laborer who called himself a servant. When He gave the explanatory passage that tells the kind of life He would live, He deliberately drew out from all the possible Old Testament passages the one that calls the Messiah 鍍 he Servant of the Lord. This countered all expectations that that men had previously had concerning the coming Messiah.

Then he counteracted the exaggerated desire for wealth that has plagued all men and all ages. The idea of success in every age has to do with the accumulation of wealth. An exaggerated desire for wealth has plagued, and continues to plague every age of human history. But Jesus came, and merely by being what He was, engaging in the role He engaged in, entering the position He entered, He countered that exaggerated desire for wealth, and was Himself, apparently, quite poor. When his parents took Him to present Him in the temple when He was just a few days old, they were to make an offering. There were graded levels of the offering depending on the financial capability of the parents. Joseph and Mary gave the lowest possible offering two turtle doves. This indicates the impoverished condition in which they lived. Jesus, throughout his life, counteracted or contradicted man's exaggerated desire for money and wealth.

There's a third counteraction that He brought by entering this position as a carpenter. He contradicted the love of idleness that has forever been a mark of unenlightened hearts. When you go back and read the history of any society, the people who were deemed the most successful were the ones who resided in ivory palaces and rested upon luxurious beds. They spend most of their time eating fruit and being fanned by servants. This is the idea of success and accomplishment in almost every society in the history of the world. However, Jesus ran totally counter to that view. He countered the love of idleness by entering the position of the carpenter.

Then fourthly, He contradicted the idea that continual excitement and brilliant success are essential elements of real life. Though continual excitement is not a necessary element of real life, it is very easy to fall into the trap of believing that it is. Because our society elevates excitement and success so highly, we tend to drift into agreement.

What is the average church 癡 idea of success? Continual excitement and brilliant accomplishments are regarded as essential elements of success. One can't help but wonder what Jesus would say if He were to enter into situations like this today. Do not misunderstand what I am saying. These things aren't to be discounted altogether. But we must be constantly reminded that genuine success is not wrapped up in those things.

The manner in which Jesus came into history tells us that real existence before God consists of a person's inner life and not his outer life at all; that the life that some would regard as insignificant may be of absolute importance. I wish I could illustrate that. How many times have

I gone into a home and walked up to a little corner bed where there was an emaciated body, or a twisted body, or an incapacitated body, and the person with radiant face talked so wonderfully about Jesus and about the things of God. Although the person can't mobilize himself or herself to get up, nevertheless he makes a great contribution by his walk with God, a walk which the world will never see.

You see, a person of relative insignificance among men may be of absolute importance to God. Jesus spent nearly twenty years in the position of a carpenter or an apprentice carpenter, and His life would have looked relatively insignificant. Admittedly, in that day a carpenter's position was much like the early blacksmith in American history. He was the center of village activity, and many things passed in and out of his shop. Everybody at one time or another came in and out of His shop. But what looked like relative insignificance possessed absolute importance in the sight of God. Jesus entered the position of a carpenter.

II. JESUS ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION OF A CARPENTER

The second truth of Christ the Carpenter is that He *engaged in the profession* of a carpenter. What are the main works of a carpenter? They are basically two to build and to repair. Would you turn your imagination loose for just a moment? Think of Jesus building a cottage for somebody in Nazareth. Think of Jesus putting together and assembling the parts of a table for somebody in Nazareth. Think of Jesus carving the dimensions of a chair for somebody in Nazareth. Probably, by the things He suggested in his vocational illustrations, His main work had to do with farm implements. In fact, there's an old legend, perhaps reliable, that says that above the doorway of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth there was a sign that said, "My yokes are easy." This is at least an echo of a statement made in Matthew chapter 11, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light."

Again use your imagination and think of Jesus making a yoke for a plow. Imagine Him standing at the door of his shop writing down an order for furniture or for farm equipment and above it stands that little wall motto, "My yokes are easy." Did you ever wonder how much he charged for a chair? I wonder if He was not something of a perfectionist. He would not allow slovenly or sloppy work. If you can imagine that one of His projects was turning out wrong, He would go back and rework it to the point of perfection, taking as much time as needed. Imagine Him making a plate for a table out of wood, or a bowl.

Isn't this profession you picture in the flesh typical of what Jesus was always doing? He was always playing the role of the carpenter. Before time began, He built. He built creation. In John 1:3, we read, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." The term used for 殿 II things is not all things in their general entirety. Instead it's the term for all things in their particular parts, in their minute technicalities. Can you see the carpenter creating the world and putting every meticulous thing in its minutest part in place? Can you see Him putting everything perfectly in place, part by part, before human history ever began? As a carpenter, He built creation.

As a carpenter, He is presently at work building His church. It is interesting that He never

gave that task into our hands. One of our greatest usurpings; one of our greatest mistakes, is to think it is our assignment to build the church. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church." Our only task is to build people, to build disciples. He will take care of the building of the church. But we abuse and twist things. We do more than practice apprentice carpentry when we try to build the church. That's His business. Our only job is to build people and let Him put together His church, in His own way.

Have you ever noticed the expression in I Corinthians 3, "We are God's building.?" Then in verse 16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" It is amazing how many people think that applies to us as individuals and especially our bodies. It doesn't. The pronouns in verse 16 are plural. 泥 on 雅 *all of you* know that *all of you* are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in *all of you*? He is not talking about me as an individual. He writes about the believer and his body in Chapter 6. In I Corinthians 3, He's talking about the church which He is building.

Ephesians Two reveals that He's building the church to have a habitation for the Holy Spirit to live in. From this we discover that Jesus, in effect, engages in the profession of a carpenter today. Not only did He build creation, not only is He building the church, but He is, in an ongoing way, building Christians right now.

Every time I think of this concept of building, I think of a church bulletin I once saw. In it was an article entitled, "Men Under Reconstruction". It was an analysis of the process of the Spirit in a Christian's life. It would be wise if we would always envision each other Christian wearing a sign declaring: "I am a Christian under reconstruction."

There are two powerful persons active in this universe. One is Satan, and through sin, he is the great destroyer. Remember what Jesus said concerning the work of Satan? He said, "the enemy comes not except to steal and to kill and to destroy." Satan is always consistent always evil, always a thief, always a killer, always a destroyer. Yet he never advertises that way. He always tells you that he's building you up to your own advantage, but he can't do that. Instead he's always tearing you down *to his advantage*.

The other person active in the universe is Jesus, the great architect and builder. He is always seeking to construct your life 如 in righteousness and true holiness. You see, every person reading these words is either being built up by Jesus or torn down by the devil. There is no other possibility. One is a carpenter, a constructor. By the way, one translation beautifully renders this question, "Is not this the *producer*?" Isn't that interesting?

What determines whether I am being built up by Jesus or being torn down by the devil? The same thing that determined what Jesus did in Nazareth. The scriptures declare that "he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. If He is not doing a mighty work in your life, then this verse diagnoses the problem. If He is doing a mighty work, this will tell you why He is accomplishing it. He will do constructive work in you only if the building permit of cooperative faith is posted over the door of your heart. If this permit of faith is not present in your life, He will refuse, by His own rule, to undertake the reconstruction job. Unbelief will

consign you to be victimized by the destructive acts of the devil. It is your response that determines whether Jesus the Carpenter He's able to build you up or Satan the Destroyer is permitted to tear you down.

Not only did He build creation, not only is He building the church, not only is He building Christians, but He is carefully constructing a future home for all believers in Heaven right now. I've always found great comfort in an interpretation of His words in John 14: "In my Father's house are many mansions." I've often wondered just what He meant by that. I'm not altogether convinced that the Father's house is only Heaven. I'm thinking He may mean that this whole universe is the Father's house and one of the mansions is Heaven. The word actually means dwelling places or apartments. Jesus may have meant that since the whole universe is my Father's house, there are some special places I am building for you. 的 go to prepare. Please do not miss the meaning of the word 苑 repair. Can you realize that the man who said that had a carpenter's calluses on His hands? It is permissible to think that He has been in Heaven for 2,000 years doing interior decorating on the place that he is preparing for us! You may rest assured that when we arrive there we will find that the place is in the usual style of His glorious works.

Furthermore, when I get there and find the place He has prepared, He's going to do a reconstructive work on me physically to get *me* ready for the *place*. Do you realize that if I went to Heaven in this body I couldn't stand it? If a lost man went to hell in his body, there would be no way he could experience it. Both of us have to have a different body the one to enjoy everything Heaven has to offer, the other to experience what Hell will mean. For this reason the Bible says: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be torn down, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Who makes that building? God does. How? Why not by means of Jesus the carpenter?

I 知 hesitant to admit that I have favorite funeral stories, but I do! Here is my all-time favorite funeral story. I would be happy to have this story told at my own funeral! It concerns James Kidd, the great Scottish preacher of many years ago. Kidd was a marvelous man of God. He was a pastor in Aberdeen for over twenty-five years. After this lengthy ministry in Aberdeen, God moved him to a new church in a different location. Finally, with great reluctance he consented to go.

When the day came for the final transfer of possessions and family to the new city and new home, they had put the last pieces of furniture out on the lawn of the old pastorium, where they had lived for over twenty-five years. It was being transported to the new place that day. James Kidd 痴 wife and family and a servant girl, Elizabeth, whom they affectionately called Betty, were outside waiting for the men doing the moving to come and pick up the remaining furnishings. Pastor Kidd, under the pretext of going back in to see if they had left anything, dismissed himself from the group and went back into the empty house. He later said that he really entered the house for the sake of nostalgia. He said he walked into the kitchen, and in spite of it being stripped bare, he remembered how that for twenty-five years his wife had made meal after meal there. Then he walked down the hallway and there on the right was the bedroom where two of their three children had been born. He said the nostalgia just swept over him with

deep sentiment. Finally he went into the middle room of the house which had housed the books of his study. He said he looked down at that spot where he had prostrated himself on the floor again and again over those twenty-five years, with an open Bible, and wrestled with God about the message to give to his people the next Lord's day. He said he didn't know how long he'd been standing there when he became conscious of somebody else being in the room. As he turned inadvertently and looked back over his shoulder, there was Betty, the servant girl, with her hands framed against the sides of the door. When their eyes met, and she knew that she had been recognized, she spoke. She said quietly, "Please, sir, do come on. Time's up. The others are waiting and the next house is a lot better anyway."

When I read that, although Pastor Kidd didn't apply it in this way, there suddenly came to the forefront of my mind overwhelming thoughts concerning what happens at the moment of the death of a believer. If there is an angel of death, I can feature that angel saying gently to the dying person, "Please, sir (please, ma'am), do come on. Time's up. The others are waiting." The farther along you get on the journey of life, the more companions you have seen depart to 電 痲 other side, and the more interested you are in the coming Heavenly reunion with them.

You see, the reason so many people cling so tenaciously to this world and this life is that most of their investments are here. But the further you go and the more you walk with Christ, the more the investments and companions you have on the other side, and the less reluctant you are to depart. "Please, sir, do come on. Time's up. The others are waiting and the next house, the one Jesus the Carpenter is now building, is a lot better anyway." Jesus engaged in the profession of a carpenter while He was on earth, and He is still doing work like that of a carpenter today.

III. JESUS EXHIBITS THE PRINCIPLES OF A CARPENTER

Third, Jesus *exhibits the principles* of a carpenter. For example, His *perception* is that of a carpenter. Any carpenter would tell you that a carpenter 痲 vocation calls for a different perception than other people employ. For example, a carpenter knows quite well how much may be hidden in what appears to others to be a very rough looking thing. Can you imagine a wagoner (that's where that family name came from, wagoner) pulling his wagon up to the door of the carpenter's shop in Nazareth to deliver a load of trees or logs. Jesus comes out to begin to sort them out. He looks at one and sees a plow in it. He looks at another and sees a table platter in it or a bowl or a child's toy. You see, this is the way He always operates with the perception of a carpenter.

Jesus saw the kingdom of God in a mustard seed. He saw the citizen of the kingdom in a child. He saw Peter in Simon. He saw Israel in Jacob. He saw Abraham in Abram. He saw Matthew in Levi. He saw Paul in Saul. He does the same thing when He looks at you. He has a carpenter's perception. He sees what may be hidden in a very rough looking thing.

Then think of a carpenter's *patience* as exemplified in Jesus. He knew, by rough experience, what pains, what persistence, what perseverance, was necessary to transform that rough-looking thing into the finished product that He desired. Have you ever thought of the paradox, the apparent contradiction in the ministry of Jesus?

Why, in a single instant Jesus healed a leper. In a single instant Jesus raised the dead, but when He looked at Simon He knew it was going to take a long time to turn him into Peter. Someone said that it all depends on what you want to produce. If you want to raise a squash, you can do it in six months. If you want to raise an oak, it will take you a hundred years. If you want to raise a redwood, you had better plan on a thousand-year project. God lets you know what He's raising when He shows you that it takes an eternity to produce the finished product He desires out of a sinful human being. Isn't it good to know that Jesus showed the patience of a carpenter?

What does it do to you when I tell you that right now at this very moment, all born-again believers (including you) are in the hands of One who is a Carpenter a thorough workman? One of His own apprentices said, "He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the final day." Jesus, as a carpenter, knew that the finest wood products are invariably made of the hardest wood. Can you imagine Jesus in His humanity beginning to learn from a veteran craftsman, such as Joseph His foster father, who at the beginning knew a lot more about carpentry than He did? However, if you look only at the Divine side, He knew so much more than Joseph did. Yet from a human standpoint, He had to learn these things. Before we digressed, the point I had made was that the finest of products are made from the hardest of woods. You can take one kind of wood and employ it for a table or a desk, but cedar wood, especially in Jesus day, was reserved to make the paneling of a palace or a temple.

Doesn't that encourage you when you see Him bending over somebody like Saul of Tarsus and getting ready (on the Damascus road) to use His hammers to shape his life into something very lovely, useful, and God-honoring? 典 hey say you are a hard case, sir, and I admit that from a human standpoint you are. But I've got news for this world, the cedar is sooner or later going to decorate the temple. In fact, R. C. H. Lenski, one of the greatest Greek and New Testament scholars in the history of the church, said that the word translated 匠 arpenterin our text means "One who makes things out of hard material." I find great courage in that Jesus exhibits the principles of a carpenter.

IV. JESUS EXPERIENCED THE PASSION OF A CARPENTER

Finally, Jesus *experienced the Passion* of a carpenter. Isn't it strange how God put all this together? You see, when Jesus came, even before He died, He bore the common curse that was imposed on man because of sin. What is the history of work in the human race? How did work, manual labor, start in the human race? Where did it start? The Bible declares that Adam and Eve were assigned to work in the garden of Eden, even before sin and the curse. God said to our first parents, 典 ake this garden, dress it and keep it to meet your own needs and to get a dividend of glory for me. Was that work dignified? Yes. When God gave work as an assignment to man, it was a symbol of dignity. He told them to labor in the garden in order to glorify Him and to meet their own needs. But then man sinned and God said, "From now on, in the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread as a part of the curse upon your depravity." So that which started as dignity descended into a token of depravity.

God had said that the earth would produce thorns and thistles as a part of the curse of sin.

But when Jesus came, He took a crown of thorns upon His brow, as if to raise man 癡 curse, the curse of sin, and place it upon Himself. This symbolized the truth that He bore the curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He took work, which had become a symbol of depravity, and engaged in it to restore its dignity. Many people seem to think that the more manually or more menially you work the less dignified you are. Yet from God's standpoint, the more manually or menially you work, the closer you are to the roots of all things.

As I bring this study to a conclusion, think with me about the endless cycle of Jesus' life. When you go back before time ever began, here's what you find God the Father, in consultation with God the Son, gave Him a specific assignment to accomplish and imbued Him with special equipment to get it done. God the Father, gave a specific assignment and special equipment to God the Son. As a result, He can call Jesus, the name which reveals His specific assignment, by the other name, Christ, which reveals His special equipment, the Anointed One. He came as Jesus, 鉄 aviou, and functioned in His redeeming work under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

When He reached his majority as a Jewish child, having passed His Bar mitzvah, between 12 and 13 years of age, His Father began to give Him specific assignments and endowed Him with special equipment to get them done. As a part of His assignment, His earthly adopted father, Joseph, began to teach Him the trade of the carpenter. Then, if tradition is correct, Joseph died when Jesus was about sixteen years of age, leaving Jesus to care for His family by serving as the village carpenter of Nazareth.

At the appointed time, He said to his mother, "Things can't be the same anymore. I've now got a specific major assignment that you can't understand at this time." After three years of building the foundation for His Kingdom, He turned back for the special equipment He would need for His final redemptive assignment. It is as if He came back to His own carpentry shed and there received His special assignment to redeem men from sin. At that time, the Father placed in His hands some familiar materials two logs of wood and four nails and said, 典 hese are the materials we will use to produce salvation for sinful men. It is interesting that Jesus came to die, He carried the wood to the place of the sacrifice. Is that anything new? He was always carrying wood. His flesh was pressed up against the wood of the sacrifice. Is that anything new? He was always in close contact with wood. Though the Jewish means of capital punishment is through stoning, Jesus wasn't stoned. He was nailed to a tree! In I Peter 2:24, Peter tells us that ..." He His own self a carpenter's self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Somebody beautifully said, "Long before the nails held the carpenter, the Carpenter held the nails." And so when it was all over, His life had recycled.

The Father gave Him a specific assignment, saying, "We're now going to accomplish the redemption of this world." He then gave Him the special equipment of two rough-hewn pieces of wood and four big spike-sized nails in order to fulfill His assignment. We ought never to forget the price that a carpenter through His Passion paid for our redemption.

Two farming brother lived on adjoining farms. In over forty years of farming side by side, they had never had a serious conflict. But that changed suddenly in one day. A small misunderstanding between them grew into a major difference, and then it exploded into a bitter

argument, followed by weeks of cold silence between them.

One morning there was a knock at John's door. When he answered the knock, he found a man holding a carpenter's toolbox in his hand. The man said, "I'm a carpenter, and I'm looking for a few days' work. Do you have any small jobs on your place that I might help with?" John replied, "I do have a job for you. Do you see that creek running right over there?" He pointed toward his brother's farm, and the property line between them. Last week, there was only an open meadow there, but he took a bulldozer to the river levee, and now there's a creek between us. He did this to spite me, but I'll let you help me answer him. There's a pile of lumber over by my barn. I want you to build an eight-foot fence on this side of the creek, so I won't need to see his place anymore.

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the assignment. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll do a good job for you. John, the older brother, had to go to town for supplies, so he got the materials ready for the carpenter and then he was off to town. The carpenter worked with great effort all day long, measuring, sawing, assembling, nailing. About sunset the farmer returned. The carpenter was standing exhausted over a finished job. The farmer's eyes popped and his mouth fell open as he saw the result. *There was no fence there at all; instead, there was a bridge* a bridge stretching across the creek. As the carpenter had promised, it was a good job, handrails and all. As the older brother stood shocked, his neighbor, his younger brother, approached the far end of the bridge, scratching his head with one hand and raising the other as if asking a question. The two brothers walked onto the bridge and met in the middle. The younger brother said tenderly, "I can't believe you've built this bridge after all I've said and done. But I appreciate it. After all, it's time we put this silly disagreement behind us and patched things up. It was killing us and wrecking all those years of happiness we had spent together, anyway. Each put out his hand to the other, and then they embraced each other with open arms.

They turned to see the carpenter lifting his toolbox and turning to leave. "Oh, wait! called out the older brother, "I have a lot more projects around here that I need help with. The carpenter answered, "I'd love to, but I have a lot more bridges to build."

Friends, the Carpenter Who originally built the universe came to build the Biggest Bridge of all, the Bridge of open traffic between offending man and an offended God. We call it the bridge of Salvation. The Carpenter used the rough-hewn arms of a wooden Cross to build this Bridge, and any of us, though we are sinners, can go home to God by way of that Cross. Once we have crossed the Bridge ourselves, we are to reflect all the time as the Carpenter's Apprentices, not building walls between us and others, but pointing to the Big Bridge while building smaller bridges of communication between us and others. So be it for the Carpenter's sake, and for the sake of men needing to cross the chasm between themselves and God.

Finally, I want to leave with you two ideas. Jesus needs our full surrender. For you see, if He is going to do the work He wishes to accomplish in your life, before He can make you over He has to take you over. However, if you, like the people of Nazareth, rebel in unbelief, then He will find someone else to work on. He must be able to take you over before He can make you

over.

Edwin Markam's great little parable called "The Parable of the Builders", illustrates so graphically the truth that I have been trying to convey. Let me repeat it in my own words. It's the story of a very wealthy man who decided one day he was going to do somebody a good deed. The idea just formed in his mind to be good to somebody. He was out walking over his vast estate pondering what he might do, to whom and for whom he might do his good deed, when he saw down in a hidden valley a frame building that housed a carpenter and his very large family. The wealthy man had forgotten the carpenter's presence on his estate. The sight of the house reminded him that this was a destitute situation. The carpenter barely made ends meet. He would likely never be able to supply much for his family. Suddenly the wealthy man realized that here was an excellent opportunity to perform his good deed.

Upon returning to his office, and planning for a day, he called the carpenter in and had him sit down across the desk from him. He reached into his desk and pulled out the blueprint for the building of a large home. He said to the carpenter, "I have a building project which I want you to complete for me. I want you to build a house according to these specifications. He gave the dimensions, the location for it, exactly how much money was to be spent on all the materials in each part of the house. He said, "I want it to be a turn-key job. When the day comes that you have finished, come back and present the key and the blueprint and then I will settle with you.

Needless to say, the man was elated to get the work and went immediately to the proposed site and began to survey it. Soon he started laying the foundation. Then it began to occur him, "There is no supervisor on this job but me. I could take the money assigned for the materials, put inferior materials in the house, put the difference in my pocket, and nobody but me would ever know it and so he did. Out of that substantial amount of money, he was able to pocket about \$15,000 dollars. When it was over, he looked at his work and decided nobody would ever know. He could hardly even detect it himself. So he went back in, presented the blueprint and the key and told the wealthy owner of the estate that the job was completed.

The wealthy man asked, "Is it a turn-key job?" To which the builder replied, "Yes, sir, just as you specified." And to his utter amazement, the man then reached into a desk drawer, took out the deed *and signed the house over to him!* You see, he explained, "I intended all the time to give the home to you and your family, so that you could live in a house built by your own hands."

Here's the idea of the story. *You rob God* when you don't follow the Master's blueprint. *You rob everybody around you* when you don't follow the master blueprint. But the bottom line is that *you finally cheat nobody but yourself.*

Jesus the Carpenter needs our full surrender. Then He needs fellow servants. The Master Carpenter today is soliciting apprentices.

"The Carpenter of Nazareth comes down

the street again in every land and age
and He still is building men.
Today we hear Him knock.
He goes from door to door.
Are there any workmen out of work?
The Carpenter always needs more."

Jesus was the Master Carpenter, and we are simply to be apprentice carpenters all of our lives. Isn't it somewhat true that we are to consciously, deliberately enter the same kind of position Jesus did; the kind that counteracts the world's expectations; its exaggerated desire for wealth; its love of idleness; its idea that continual excitement and brilliant success are essential elements of real life?

Aren't we, also, to engage in the profession, spiritually, of a carpenter to build people as He built creation, the church and us, and our future home? Aren't we, also, to exhibit the principles of carpentry, looking to see how much may be hidden in a rough-looking thing; engaging patiently in the painstaking work of transforming a rough-hewn thing into a finished product, knowing that the finest things may be made of the hardest wood and that our own lives may be hard wood? This very day, we may be in contact with people who are hard wood, needing to be enlisted for the Carpenter's touch in their lives.

Aren't we to join Him in experiencing His passion so that we can say "I, too, am crucified?" I stand crucified with Christ so that in my deepest spirit I feel the spikes and the rough wood and become more and more willing to die to me to live to Him and others.

Perhaps there is some person who is reading this who has never been saved. Let me remind you that what Jesus, the Carpenter, made with beams of wood and a few nails given Him by His Father, is your means of getting to Heaven. Look at those wounds in the hands as His flesh is pressed to the wood and then a big rubber-headed mallet is used to crash that spike down through those pure hands. The blood that poured forth from those hands can cover and cleanse away your sins. Have you applied to Jesus, the nail-scarred Carpenter, for the forgiveness of your sins?

Have you received as your Lord and Savior, the One who came on special assignment with special equipment to save you?

I want to ask you right now to just simply say to Jesus, "Lord, right now I receive you into my heart as my Lord and Savior, Companion and Friend. Thank you for being a carpenter. As I receive you, I trust you now to build my life for your purpose and glory."

Perhaps there are Christians reading this who are flagging or lacking in your full surrender? Has He been able to take you over so He can make you over? Why not present yourself again at this moment into the capable hands of Jesus, the Carpenter?

