

"Thumbin'
Your Way"





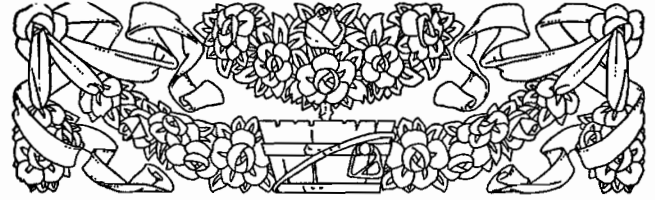
"Thumbin' Your Way"



JOSIAH HOPKINS

Parson of

The Country Church of Hollywood



NE DAY, lately, I was a-drivin' Dan to Punkin Center to do a little tradin' fer Sarah. The Ladies' Aid was to meet that day at Lige Gupton's, so Sarah gimme the eggs and chickens and a few vegetables to take to the Center to sell.

So, as I was a-lettin' Dan sorter poke along the big road, I noticed a feller a-settin' under a sycamore tree on the side o' the road ahead o' me, a-fannin' hisself with a palm leaf fan. When I got up to where the feller was at, he commenced to jerk his thumb towards Punkin Center. I thought at first the man was kinder addled from the heat, so I stopped my horse and howdy'd with him. He told me he was aimin' to "thumb a ride" to town. I asked him about what he meant by "thumbin'," and he told me that was the way a lot o' people travelled these days: jest set on the side o' the road, and jerk their thumb towards where they wanted to go. I told him I had a good load o' eggs, chickens, and things, and that I'd be seein' him, and drove on.

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

I told Sarah about it when I got home late that night. She said I orter took the poor man on into town. But I told her that I still believed I done right in not takin' him. And here's my reason: I don't 'low to pick up nobody and load Dan up with 'em, unless they're up walkin' and a-travellin' in the general direction of where they aim to go. 'Course Sarah had more to say, as women generally do when they want to carry their pint, but I'll leave it to you all whether I was right er wrong. Now, here's my side of the whole thing: First and foremost, I believe in lendin' a hand all right where it's deservin', but I'm set and determ'd to discourage anybody from settin' under a tree and fannin' theyselves with one hand, and thumbin' their way with the other.

The Bible's awful clear on that pint. You take the chillern of Israel, the Lord lead 'em all right, supplied all their needs in the wilderness journey. Yes, He fed 'em on quails when they was hongry, give 'em water from a solid rock a time er two, had a cloud by day there, and a pillar o' fire by night to show 'em the road to travel. He took 'em through the Red Sea on dry land, and done all that could a-been done UNTIL He got 'em to the Jordan River. **But the Lord didn't run no ferry across the Jordan;** they had to walk across! 'Course the

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

Lord turnt back the Jordan waters so it wouldn't splash on the ark, but the priests had to first step in the water before it begun to roll back! I told Sarah, a-settin' right there in the parsonage parlor on the mohair sofa, that my text on that pint would be Deuteronomy 1:8, "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land."

You see, neighbors, the Lord will carry you so fur, then you have to git down and walk a while. I recollect when Sarah and me and the chillern was in the Center a-lookin' at a parade. The chillern wanted everthin' in sight, balloons, parched pinders, fried fish, candy, and goodness knows what all. We bought a few little things and et the lunch Sarah had brought, but, no, the chillern wan't satisfied. They got as mad as all out o' doors and took the limber-leg. And you parents that's been to town know what the limber-leg is: when younguns git that, they jest set down. They won't stand up a-tall. When the city pavement and sidewalks is hot, you don't have to worry, they won't set long!

There's a site o' difference between bein' leg-weary and takin' the limber-leg. When you have the limber-leg, you quit and set down; but when you're tired and all tuckered out, why that's bein' leg-weary. The Lord will pick you up and tote

you when you're tired, er mind-tired, er heart-tired. But, you set on the roadside with the limber-leg and fan your self with one hand, thumb your way with the other, and see ef the Lord'll pick you up! No, sirree, He won't! You got ta make a start like them priests done there in the third chapter of Joshua, when they walked into the Jordan, and the waters rolled back. What we need today is folks that will start to where they want to go, and towards what they want to be, and then the Lord'll "take 'em up." 'Course he will!

You take Buck Batts, he's allers a-tellin' me that the reason that he sets around and does nothin' is that he's lookin' fer somethin' to turn up! I told him ef he'd set around long enough, somethin' shore would turn up. But, it'd be his toes! Then, I went on to say to Buck that the trouble with this risin' generation is that about half o' the human people is settin' around waitin' fer their ship to come in, and most of the other half was layin' around on the Road of Life a-tryin' to thumb their way to where they aimed to go.

This feller was a-settin' there on the road a-thumbin' his way to Punkin Center said to me that he was up against it." You know what I told him? "Well," I said, "Brother, no man is ever up against it from going forwards he allers gits that a-way

from backin' up!" Go ferwards, and the chances are ten to one that you won't git up against it. In fact, they're two main kinds o' people in the world today, the "set-and-waiters" and the "go-gitters." The "set-and-waiters" are all along the roadway of human life a-thumbin' their way as fur as they can git somebody else to carry 'em. It's a thousand to one chance they won't travel very fur! But, them "go-gitters" is different! They start out a-walkin' towards where they're a-goin'; ef they git a "lift," well and good, and they're thankful fer it. The main thing is they're willin' to go git what they're after. The "go-gitters" can afford to set after they've got to the place they started fur, and they deserve all the settin' and restin' they can git after they reach their goal!

Now, there are people that set by the Way of Life and trust to Luck. That brings up another one of these questions of thumbin' your way. Now, what is Luck? You all know where the road forks there at the Five Forks. Several roads run together there, and then go on as the main road to Punkin Center. It's jest that-a-way with Luck. My docterin is that Luck is the main highway where the "Preparation Road" runs into the "Opportunity Road."

Now, there was a wash out on a bridge once. A

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

great river cut off the passengers on the fur side o' the bridge from the city where they all was a-goin' to. There the train was stalled, and the conductor of the train was a-wishin they had some way of sendin' word across that river fer a boat to cross from the fur side and take the passengers acrost the river. What happened? Why, there was a bright-eyed young feller on that train that had been a travelin' some time on the "Preparation Road." Now he's come to where the "Opportunity Road" comes in. So, he says to the conductor, "I can send word acrost that river." "Go ahead," says the conductor man. The young man did, and in a few hours all the passengers were acrost that river, and in the city on the other side. How did he do it? I can tell you! That young feller took the whistle on that railroad engine, and by pullin' the whistle cord, sent a message jest like he was a-telegraphin', and they heard it acrost the river and sent the boat fer the trainload o' passengers. You see that young man had learned to send telegram messages on the "Road to Preparation." When "Opportunity" run into that road, why he traveled on the highway that folks sometimes call "Luck." And that young feller was named Thomas Edison!

The trouble with this "thumbin' your way" is

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

that the only preparation sich folks make fer their journey is to pick out a place to stand where they think somebody will pass and pick 'em up, and they stand, er set, a-jerkin' their thumbs towards the way they want to go. I bound you right at this minute there's enough people a-standin' on the roads a-jerkin their thumbs to gether the corn crop in these three counties! My doctern is sich folks as the "thumb-jerkers" orter stay where they're at until they make some plans about where they're a-goin', and what they're a-goin' to do when they git there. When you depend on Luck without bein' prepared, why you shore ain't got much chance of suc-ceedin'.

Then, there's another thing about this "thumb-in'" business; it has created a lot of restlessness as shore as you're borned to die. All a feller has to do to leave home now is to git out on the main road and hist his thumb towards where he wants to go! Law me! When Sarah and me was a-grow-in' up, it meant somethin' fer a young man er woman to leave home. There was a lot of fare-wellin' around in the settlement. There was the packin' of a valise, er maybe a little funny-lookin' trunk, and one and all cried when they left. But, not now! Ef one of the young folks is missin' these days when the family gethers at night (ef

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

they ever gethers), they jest natcherly suppose the missin' one has thumbed his way somewhere else! That's what's got this army of young people a-traipsin acrost the country a-wastin' the precious years when they orter be preparin' fer life and its responsibilities! As I told Sarah, I am agin it first, last, and always!

I says to our boy, "Bud, ef you're really goin' anywheres, why, fer pity sakes, make your plans and go right!" I says to him, too, "Dependin' on other people to carry you all over the country breaks down somethin' on the inside of you that orter never be broke down. You look to others to tote you around until you lose the power to git up and move towards your goals in life." You all needn't laugh at me jest because I'm an old backwoods parson, fer I'm a-tellin' you the naked truth!

Now, you take the study o' ducks, and that's somethin' I've thought a right smart on. I've watched the wild ducks come and light up and down Goose Creek, then I've watched the ducks around the different homes in the neighborhood. What happened to their legs? You know, and I know, that ducks is mighty nigh lost their legs; they're all wings. And why? They flew a lot and never walked much. That's exactly what they've

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

done! The Lord has a rule in the universe, fur and wide, up and down, that what you don't use, you lose! That's why the Lord don't tote His own chilern all the time. He sets 'em down every now and then and makes 'em walk theyselves. Gracious sakes! Ef the country is a-goin' to set down and wait fer somebody to come along and carry 'em where they're a-pintin' their thumbs, we'll lose our power to do things jest like the ducks come mighty nigh a-losin' their legs.

'Course Sarah's a great believer in helpin' folks out. So am I, but when you help people 'til it makes 'em no count, you're a-doin' 'em harm instead o' doin' 'em good. The Lord give the chillern of Israel a pillar of cloud and fire, but He never furnished 'em heavenly chariots to ride in to the promised land! He give 'em water from the rocks, but they had to go to it to drink! He drove the pattridges up to the Israelites, but they had to ketch 'em. He provided a brass serpent to cure snake-bite, but they had to go look at it! He led 'em to the place where they could enter Canaan, but they had to git up and cross over Jordan! He give 'em the land of promise, but they had to drive out the folks that was already a-livin' there! Yes, the Lord helps, but only so much; He carries folks, but only so fur!

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

But, somebody will ask jest what Sarah asked me. She said, in replyin' back in her way, "Well, ef the Lord leaves a part of Salvation fer us to do, then we are saved by works, and not by faith." Here's my answer to that: as fer as fergivin' your sins and changin' your nature, the Lord has to do it all, fer there ain't nothin' that human people can do about that. But, yet and still, when it comes to growin' in grace and enjoyin' the Lord's promises, we have to do our part.

Take the text I quoted Sarah there in Deuteronomy 1:8, "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land." The Lord never picked up Israel by the napes of their necks and set 'em down in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Shore He didn't! He led 'em about through the wilderness, a-learnin' 'em how to worship Him and how to act. Then, when they had learned what He wanted them to know about Him and His plan, He drapped 'em down with a river a-rollin' between them and where He wanted 'em. That's the way the Lord does. Its sorter like Sarah learned our chillern to walk. She stood off a ways from the child she was a-learnin' and held out a cookie, er some candy, and made the youngun walk to git it! The Lord allers sets folks off a piece from their goal, er in front of an open door, then

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

He waits 'til they git up and hustle on to the goal, er through the door. Many a soul has set a few inches from a great achievement, er a little ways from an open door, and tried to thumb their way to the places where the Lord wants 'em. They can set there 'til doomsday and die of mildew er dry rot, but the Lord ain't a-goin' to tote 'em through that open door, ner over them few steps to their goal.

You take that verse there in Revelation 3:8 where the Lord says to the church at Philadelphia, "Behold, I have set thee before an open door, and no man can shut it." You see? The Lord never toted 'em, ner offered to tote 'em through that open door; He jest carried 'em to the door that was open, and set 'em down right in front of it! Neighbors, the Lord never will set you down in front of a closed door, neither will He carry you through an open one. He'll pint out the door, and give you an idear of what's inside that door, but you got to do two things: git up, and git through that door yourself!

Oh, how many times have I seen people a-settin' right at the open door to suc-cess in many ways, er a new life, but you couldn't stir 'em with a sharp stick. They was a-settin' there a-jerkin their thumbs toward that open door! Sarah's got a book

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

with a purty thing about that in it; it says, "If wishes was hosses, beggars could ride." Ain't that the truth? There ain't a bit o' use a-settin' in front of an open door and a-wishin' you was inside. You got to git up and start through that door!

I shore am proud that it says there in Revelation, "And no MAN can close it." 'Course that means the door that God opens to every soul. Nobody but God can close that! I've saw men strain and grunt a-tryin' to close the door on a human soul, but it ain't never been done yit! The Lord says no man can close the door of hope on a soul. The Roman Empire, through its laws, had closed many doors fer that pore thief that hung on a cross by the side of Jesus, but the door of endless life with God could not be shut. Jesus said to that pore man, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Folks, however many doors may have been closed, the door to health, suc-cess, fortune, even life itself, remember that the door to God is always open!

Its sorter funny that both of these great texts that I've been a-talkin' on begin with the same word, "Behold!" And both go further by sayin' that the Lord had "set" the ones He was a-talkin' to, before somethin'. In Deuteronomy 1:8, it says,

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

"Behold, I have set the land before thee"; Revelation 3:8 says, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." In the first one, the Lord set the land before Israel; in the second one, He set the church at Philadelphia before an open door. But, in both cases, the Lord brought out the same thought: that is, that somebody had to git up and travel to reach what was offered. The word, "Behold," was put there to draw attention to the lesson the Lord wanted each group of people to learn. It was jest like the Lord pinte His finger and said to Israel, "Look at Canaan acrost Jordan, but you've got to go to it"; and to the church at Philadelphia, "Look at that open door, but you've got to git up an' walk through it." I'm all agin folks a-thinkin' that they can git anywhere at all by thumbin' their way.

Sarah sorter got me down by jerkin' her thumb towards the wood pile, but I pretended not to see her. Then she said, "Josiah, I never see you a-pintin' your thumb in the direction of that wood and ax!" You know what I said? I come right back with my pint again and said, "Thumbin'! Yes, I could stand here a-jerkin' my thumb at all that wood 'til I was as old as Methuselah, but that wouldn't git the wood cut." I added, "I'll have to go out there and cut it myself." Then, she pinte

THUMBIN' YOUR WAY

her thumb towards the stove in the parsonage kitchen; it was as cold as a landlord's smile. I asked her what she meant by a-pintin' at the stove. She said there wouldn't be no supper cooked until I cut the wood and brought it in. There you are! It makes no difference what question a man brings up in the house, it allers works around so that he gits the worst of it! Anyways, I'm agin "Thumbin' Your Way."

—Josiah Hopkins.

A PRODUCT OF



1888 W. WASHINGTON BLVD.
LOS ANGELES