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IF I MAKE MY BED IN HELL
Will H. Huff

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The bard of Israel breathed into poetic language the emotions and aspirations of the soul. He sang humanity's song, uttered humanity's cry and described humanity's struggle. He worded the anguish of the soul in dealing with its past record, its present condition, and its future hopes. He was a poet, and poets are not theologians, but with the fervent passion and vivid imagination, he described conviction as the pains of hell, penitence as breaking the very bones and sin as blood-guiltiness.

David was a child of genius, the youngest son in a peasant's home. He could run errands, herd sheep, slay a bear, bring down a Philistine, or be court minstrel and play a harp. He was chosen of God to fill a large place in the world's history. He became a star actor on the Jewish stage. He established a kingdom that lasted for centuries and his military exploits would rank him among earth's greatest. He was a fascinating personality with a great, tender, sensitive soul, with delicate sensibilities that could thrill with ecstasies of joy or throb in deepest anguish. He had the true chivalry. When he became the target of jealous attack, he refused to take advantage of a sleeping foe; wept over a rebellious son; forgave the man who cursed him; fed a cripple at his own table and never forgot the house of Jonathan. Homer wrote the Iliad and Milton wrote "Paradise Lost," but David with ample faculty and fertile resource, gave to the saints, psalms and songs that will last forever. The world will never tire reading the psalms of David, because in them are crowded all the experiences of the human race. He dealt in universal elements and, as a poet, he is worthy a place in Westminster Abbey.

The drama of his life was changeful, his career was checkered, and his history eventful. This man came from the Bethlehem pasture-fields to the throne of Israel, from following these few sheep in the wilderness, to become the shepherd of a great people. The vicissitudes of his life were many and great. He knew what it was to be anointed king and live at [the king's] court, and then he knew what it was to be hunted as a partridge on the mountains of Judah. He knew what it was to walk the high white line of a clean life and he also knew what it was to have a break and smirch his moral garments. He broke the seventh commandment. We do not shield him, nor offer any excuse for his sin. There is no excuse for sin. He offered none for himself. But this is in his favor: when the faithful prophet unearthed him, he did not lie and say he was innocent, he did not blame the other person and he did not behead the preacher who brought the thing to daylight. He stepped down from the throne, took off his royal robe, put sackcloth on his loins, sprinkled ashes on his head and cried to God for mercy. God forgave him. We ought to. But before he got back, he found that sin was no trifle, but something that needed radical treatment. His need was deeper down than forgiveness. He gave us a lot of plain talk on a delicate subject.

David made an excursion into hell. He is [an] authority on the subject. His conscience had been lashed with remorse and his soul pierced through with the arrow of the Almighty. He found there was no place in the universe to hide from the omniscient eye of Jehovah. Wherever he went he found God. If he ascended into heaven, God was there. If he took the wings of the morning and went to the uttermost parts of the earth, he met God. Or if he tried to hide in the mountains, the first one he met was God.

He said, "If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." Sin makes man like a lost traveler and though he take lodging in perdition, he will not rid himself of the fact of God. God is love. Yes, and God is a fact. He will never become ancient history, even to a man in hell. The historian said, "In the beginning, God," and he might have said, "All the way along is God." We hear much these days about the divine eminence. Well, God is divinely eminent and that will not be forgotten by a man no difference where he goes. If the saints rejoice at the remembrance of God's holiness, why not lost sinners remember and tremble. If God be the same yesterday, today and forever, though man's probation be over, he will still be somewhere and will not forget. Though they fail to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, they will not fail to remember he was their Creator. Down the ages men have tried to get rid of God. They never have gotten rid of him yet -- they never will. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of the fact that Jesus Christ came to this world as the Saviour of men. The Bible did not close with the book of Malachi. We have a New Testament and that is the record of the God-man. This world still has its Christmas and its Easter Sunday. The soil of this planet was made sacred by his footprints. He was born in Bethlehem, lived at Nazareth, died at Jerusalem, was buried in Joseph's tomb, rose the third day, left the world forty days later and went back to the right hand of the Father and there he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He came to his own, they received him not. He was despised and rejected of men. Some besought him to leave their coasts. Judas sold him for thirty pieces of silver and Jerusalem cast him out. They said, "Let his blood be on us." For over nineteen hundred years men have been systematically trying to keep him out of their lives. They have succeeded in getting rid of him, as far as salvation is concerned, but they have not succeeded in getting rid of the fact that he was here. He still saith, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forever,

Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Jesus Christ will be a fact in this universe forever, both in heaven and in hell.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of the fact that the Holy Spirit was faithful in reproving me of sin, righteousness and judgment. He reproves men of sin, not some one's else sin, but his own. He reproves not for drunkenness or swearing, but because they believe not on Jesus Christ. Christ is the touchstone here. He reproves of righteousness, not my own, not morality, but that righteousness imparted by Jesus Christ. He reproves of judgment, not man's but God's. From the fall to the flood, he was striving with men. From Noah's rainbow to Christ's star, he was faithful in dealing with men. From Christ's day till Pentecost morning, and from Pentecost morning until time and mercy are no more, he will be faithful in his office work of reproving sinners. Men have rebelled against him. They have vexed his Holy Spirit Men have resisted him. Stephen said, "As your fathers did, so do ye." Men have blasphemed and will never find forgiveness in this world nor the next. Men have grieved him and failed to receive his seal. They have quenched him and put out his fire, but in heaven, earth, or hell men will not get rid of the fact that the Holy Ghost was faithful.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of the fact that I had the word of God. God's word is settled forever in heaven -- in hell too. With all the additions that Mormonism and all other "isms" have added to it, and all the subtractions that human smartness has tried to take from it, the word of God is still perfect, converting the soul. I may be ignorant of it, leave it dusty on my table, fail to look into it as a mirror, but it will judge me at the last day. We can hardly plead ignorance and say, "I did not know." Why didn't we know? We were familiar with other things.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of my own personality. God said, "I am." Man can say the same thing in his finite sphere. He will be somebody forever. If he goes to heaven, the kingship of his personality will unfold. If he plunges into darkness, he will have himself on his hands. Man can no more annihilate his own personality than he can annihilate God. Man came from his Maker; he is somebody; he will be somewhere eternally.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of my own character. Character is made up of characteristics. Holy choice, holy service and a holy heart make a holy man. Wrong choice, wrong doing, wrong being produce an unholy man, and character will abide either in heaven or hell. Going to hell will no more reform a man than going to any other place of sin.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of my memory. Memory will either be a blessing here and a royal diadem on our brow hereafter, or a curse here and a fiery scourge forever. Abraham said, "Son, remember." If we take lodging in perdition we will not, we cannot, forget. We will not forget the opportunities we ignored and the mercies we refused. A lost man will have ample time to see what a fool he made of himself.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of a guilty conscience. There will be no place to get rid of guilt there. We have read Hawthorne's book, "The Scarlet Letter," and saw Arthur Dinsdale writhe and twist through years of agony. Guilt, like a hawk had put its claws in his conscience and its beak in his heart. He found no balm for his guilty soul. He fell dead on the

scaffold where Hester Payne received the badge of shame years ago. But what if death does not end all and guilt goes on forever?

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of my past record. I will love that blotted manuscript forever. Balaam still has his past record. He loved the wages of unrighteousness. Achan still has the record of the Valley of Achor. Judas Iscariot still has the record that he betrayed innocent blood. Ananias and Sapphira still have the record of that service, where they lied to the Holy Ghost. A record may be easy or hard to make, but when it is made it will abide either above or below.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will not get rid of service. We know in this country, we become servants to whom we yield ourselves to obey. We serve here. John says that in heaven Christ's servants will have his name in their foreheads and they shall serve him. If there be service on earth and service in heaven, why not in hell? Men seem to like Satanic service here. They stick to it. There they will have a job for eternity. The devil seems to have plenty for his folks to do in this country. He keeps them busy here. I suppose he will in his own domain. His service may not be so attractive there.

"If I make my bed in hell," my wages will still keep coming. We don't work for nothing here. Men expects wages. They get it, good wages too. Well, the wages of sin is death. Death is hell's currency. I suppose there will be everlasting installments of it. There will be no stringency in money matters. There will be so much gold and silver that it will canker and eat their flesh like fire.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will have no one to blame but myself. Here it is easy to put blame on someone else. That's what Adam did. But our shaft of fire from the judgment throne will rid us of all flimsy excuses, destroy our refuge of lies and discover to us the true facts in the case. If a man does not go to heaven, it's his own fault. If he walks into perdition, it's because he traveled the thunder-roads. He can't back into heaven or go to hell by proxy.

"If I make my bed in hell," I will have darkness a-plenty and company of my own kind. In this world men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They will not come to the light, lest their deeds be made manifest. In perdition they will have outer darkness forever. Light travels with awful velocity, but no ray has ever penetrated that dark world. No star has ever shot [across its sky] and no comet has ever broken the spell of dense darkness. Men in this world choose their own company. There they will have the company they chose. I don't know that there will be any smoking-cars for filthy fellows, but there will be fumes of other kinds, and the Bible says, "The smoke will ascend."

"If I make my bed in hell," it will be forever. Here a man can change his environment. There it will be the same sort. Here we have skyscrapers with good ventilation. There I suppose everything will be on the ground floor. In heaven there is no night, in hell there is no morning. In heaven we go away into everlasting bliss, in hell we go away into everlasting punishment.

Sioux City, Iowa

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THE END