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THE STEWARDSHIP OF TIME
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THE GENERAL IDEA OF STEWARDSHIP

There is a tremendous difference between ownership and stewardship. The owner is responsible to no one except himself, and he is free to use whatever is his own as he chooses and to dispose of it in any way he desires. A steward holds possessions, but acknowledges the ownership of another to whom he must account both for the use he makes of his possessions and of the disposition of them.

In very fact God is the owner, and the only owner there is in all the universe. He alone can righteously use whatever is as He chooses, and dispose according to His own will without making account to any other beside.

But men are inclined to forget that God is sole owner. They are inclined to think of themselves as having unquestioned power to use and to dispose, and it is this error in concept that leads many to the misuse of their possessions. In general, men tend to be either miserly or prodigal to degrees that are sinful; and, at best, the economical life of men lacks substantial meaning unless and until they come to know themselves as partners with God in the great task of turning material things into spiritual realities.

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THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

In commenting on the Parable of the Good Samaritan, found in the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, a man of insight declared the characters in the story serve to illustrate the various attitudes toward property and goods that men assume -- bad and good. First, there were the robbers who looked upon their victim and said, "What is thine is mine, and I will take it from you by means foul or fair." Second, there were the priest and the Levite who said, "What is mine is mine, and I will hold it for use on my own conveniences and pleasures." Third, there was the Good Samaritan who said, "What is mine is thine, and I will use it for your relief and recovery."

One need not be much of a logician to discover which of the three attitudes is that of the Christian. If he were in doubt otherwise, the commandment of the Master to "Go thou and do likewise," as relating to the deeds of the Samaritan, would make it clear.

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THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

At the conclusion of the Parable of the Unjust Steward, as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, the Master said, "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." The story in brief was to the effect that a steward, finding that his master was about to dismiss him from his office, made use of the power he had to extend the emoluments of his service beyond the time of its cessation. The "lord" who commended the steward was not the Lord Jesus, but the lord or master of the steward; and he commended him because of his farsightedness. But it was indeed the Lord Jesus who observed that, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." And the simple lesson for us is that, if we are wise, we will make such use of our lives and all they imply that when death shall put an end to our days below we may go on reaping results in heaven above for our well spent time.

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OUR TIME BELONGS TO GOD

Perhaps it is easier for us to think of houses and lands and money and goods as belonging to God than it is for us to think of our time as a stewardship from God. And yet we came here without our choice, and we shall leave with or without our choice. "Our times are in his hands." A rich man lay dying. In his extremity, he cried, "I am not ready to die. I cannot die." And turning to his faithful physician, he said, "Doctor, I am a rich man: you are a wise physician. I will give you one hundred thousand dollars if you will keep me alive twelve months." But the doctor answered, "I have remedies to give, but no time to sell. I could not keep you alive another twenty-four hours if you were to give me your whole fortune. Only God can dispense time."

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TIME IS VALUABLE

A busy man reproved one who kept him waiting for an appointment, by saying, "You have wasted some precious minutes of my time, and in so doing you have robbed me of a portion of my life; for time is the stuff life is made out of."

John Wesley once used the text, "Redeeming the time." But having a special object in mind, he did not attempt to use a theme as wide as the text, but confined himself to just the one segment of the subject, "Redeeming time from sleep." And in his thesis he proposed that everyone should find out by experiment how much sleep he requires, and then should confine himself to the amount needed, and insist, feeling or no feeling, on using the rest of his time for some good purpose. Wesley found that six hours were enough sleep for him, and his saving here was, as he supposed, one of the reasons he could carry on so large a volume of work year in and year out and yet have "more leisure than any other man in England." And among his rules for using time were two that have never required revision. They were: (1) Never be unemployed. (2) Never be triflingly employed.

"How Much Owest Thou unto My Lord?"

The unjust steward in the parable mentioned above went about asking debtors to state the amount of their indebtedness. By analogy it seems quite proper that we should ask ourselves and others the amount of our debt to God. In answering such a question some may answer quickly, "We owe, God a tenth of our income and a seventh of our time." And there is a sense in which the tithe of the income and the Sabbath among the days of the week represent one's acknowledgment of his stewardship. But it is a wild mistake to suppose that in either case the full obligations of the stewardship have been discharged by the paying of the tithe and the keeping of the Sabbath.

It is true that no one can discharge his stewardship faithfully and fully without paying the tithe of his income, This is on the principle that no man can be liberal until he has been honest. No one can give until he has paid what he owes, But the tithe represents just that portion of one's income that God has told the steward specifically and in advance what to do with. One does not need any special divine guidance to pay his tithe. God has told the steward in this case to bring the tithe into the storehouse. And this means, quite definitely and plainly, put the tenth of your income into the treasury of the local church for the purpose of taking care of the program of the gospel as represented by the local church in all its functions and relations. There is no place here for saying, "I want my tithe applied on this or that special interest." Your obligation is done when you have paid your tithe into the treasury of the church. The constituted authorities of the church are responsible from then on.

But the nine-tenths that remain is the Lord's, just as the tithe was the Lord's, But God has not told you specifically and in advance what to do with this remainder, and this responsibility is a challenge to you to stay close enough to God that He may indicate to you what you shall do with that which He has entrusted to you. That some of your money and goods must be used for your personal expenses and for the needs of your family goes without saying. But how much should be

thus used depends upon a number of things; and if you do not live a life of prayer, you may stand condemned in the end for hoarding or for overspending. Some of what is entrusted to you may be required for helping the poor or for special objects connected with the spread of the gospel; but if you tithe faithfully and live in daily communion with God, you will know when and what to do with that which He has left in your care, and you will find no greater joy than that which comes from obeying Him in those instances when you "the checks" and "obeyed the touch" of His Spirit.

And it is much like this regarding time, "the stuff that life is made of." You cannot use your time for God without observing the Sabbath. For God has told you what to do with one day out of your seven, He has told you to use that day for rest and worship and in the doing of works of mercy and necessity. You do not have to have special leadings to know what to do with this one day in seven, But the keeping of the Sabbath is, like the tithe, just an acknowledgment that all your time belongs to God; and, as regarding the remaining six days of the week, you must live close enough to God to hear His voice and receive His indications as to their use.

There has at times been unnecessary confusion regarding "what day to keep." Legalists have contended that Saturday is the Sabbath and that Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, is pagan and unacceptable to God. But the Saturday Sabbath is Jewish, ceremonial, legalistic and a mark of untimeliness. There is plenty of evidence that Christians from the very day upon which Jesus used the first day of the week, His resurrection day, have observed this day as their day of commemoration and worship. That threadbare claim that Constantine, the emperor of the Roman Empire, "changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday" as based upon the fact that Constantine, after his acceptance of Christianity, passed an order that the soldiers in the army were to be relieved from drill requirements on Sunday. And, far from suggesting that this was the beginning of the Christians' observance of the first day of the week as their Sabbath, is one of the very strongest evidences that the Christians had become so established in the custom of observing the first day of the week for rest and worship that the newly converted emperor found it devolving upon him to make a decree in keeping with the customs of his newly accepted faith. It is the observance of the seventh of one's time, and not the observance of the seventh day of the week, that is fundamental in the Sabbath commandment; and Sunday is as definitely a seventh of time as Saturday or any other day of the week is or possibly can be.

But while rejecting the implications of legalism involved in Seventh-dayism, let us not allow ourselves to become delinquent or careless about observing the Christian Sabbath. The greatest opportunities for conserving and spreading the Christian faith are connected with the Sabbath day, and no greater calamity could befall the Church than that which would result from a general disregard for our Christian holy day. There is mercy in the law of the Christian Sabbath, so that one need not feel condemned when necessity drives him to do some work of a secular nature on this "best day of all the week." And it is never expected that the sick will be neglected or that any deed of mercy shall be omitted on the Sabbath. But the law of the Sabbath for Christians is established by principle and by custom. It is a day of cessation from the ordinary duties of life; a day in which to rest the body and mind from worldly cares; a day in which to read the Bible and pray; a day in which to take one's way to the place where God's people gather for worship and for praise; a day in which to give first consideration to the soul. It is God's day in that it is the day of all the days of the week that He has chosen on which we are to make our service the service of worship directly to God, and not altogether by the way of His creatures.

How shall I spend the Sabbath? Well, there is of course ever recurring necessity for special divine guidance. But no one needs ask, as pertaining to his regular custom, "Shall I go today to field or shop or store? Shall I use this day for passing amusement? Shall I use it for holiday diversion? Shall I use it as an occasion for perusing newspaper and secular magazine? Shall I use it for sports or for picnics? Shall I use it as a time for visiting kinfolks and friends who are well and happy?" Ah, no, no one needs to ask questions like these. Nor does anyone need to ask questions about buying and selling or about anything else of the nature of the weekday employment that can reasonably be avoided. And, on the other hand, who is so dull as to ask, "Shall I go to Sunday school and to church today? Shall I pray and read the Bible? Shall I read good religious books and papers? Shall I talk with my family and friends and others about God and the Church and the things of the soul?" No, people know too well what in general is proper for this holy day; and, just as Mark Twain said it was the things in the Bible that he did understand that troubled him rather than the things he did not understand, so I think it is what people do know and have no questions about that troubles them as relating to the Christian Sabbath rather than the things concerning which they have sincere and honest questions.

Just as the first step in the stewardship of money and goods is the paying of the tithe of the income into the treasury of the local church, so the first step in the stewardship of time is the observance of the Christian Sabbath according to the principles laid down in the Bible and the customs of the Church all down through the ages. "This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone," said Jesus of the tithers of His day; and the same saying is applicable to stewards of God's time as relating to the Christian Sabbath -- we can scarcely make this statement too often or make it too strongly.

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MAKING OUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE

The all-inclusiveness of the Christian devotion is involved in Paul's exhortation in the twelfth chapter of Romans, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." In the Old Testament times the sacrifice was slain, and to sacrifice came to mean to die. But the Christian way redeemed the idea from the grave and gave it vitality and challenge. The call is not to die in order to please God, but to live to please Him. And yet the thought of sacrifice as relating to entirety still remains. The body is the residence of the soul and of the spirit, and the call to give our bodies as a sacrifice is a call to give our all, without reservation and without hesitation.

The word witness in our English New Testament is a translation of the word martyr in the Greek. "Ye shall be martyrs to me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." It takes the same spirit to be a faithful witness for Christ in life that is required of the martyr in death. You may not ever be called upon to seal your testimony with your blood, as did St. Stephen; but, if you are not willing to so seal your words, you are not an acceptable witness.

There is often too much suggestion of reluctance among Christian people. There are too often intimations that we would not even do What we are doing if it were not for the fear of

punishment. And too often there is the practice of the minimum in deeds, even when there is a claim of maximum in words.

Some people have said, "If all our people would tithe, the tithe would be sufficient to take care of all the demands of the Church." But this is not true, and never has been true. It was not true in the days of ancient Israel. The real truth is this: "If all God's people would tithe, and then make such offerings as their ability makes possible, and as their hearts make them willing to do, there would be sufficient for every demand." In other words, it is not now and never was just the tithe, but "tithes and offerings." Likewise it is not possible to do what needs to be done for the conservation and spread of the gospel by the keeping of the Sabbath alone. Just as we seek never to say anything that would suggest that tithing the income is not important, so we watch against saying anything that might suggest that observing the Sabbath is optional or of passing value. But in all candor we must say that just as a tithe of the income is but a token and not the whole of the stewardship of money, so likewise the Sabbath is a token and not the whole of the stewardship of time.

The Church cannot succeed without the Sabbath, and it cannot succeed with the Sabbath alone. It must have our Sabbath tithe, and it must have our prayer meeting night offering. It must have our revival meeting offering. It must have our visitation time offering. It must have our time in increasing volume as we find opportunity for service.

The nucleus of the membership of the Church is of necessity limited. The Church can properly receive only "born again" people into its fellowship, but to have born again people, the Church must have revivals, And to have revivals, there must be new material brought under the influence and power of the Church. The membership of the Church is the force, not the field, for the gospel. And the longest arm reaching out to the unchurched is the arm of the Sunday school. The Sunday school is the great opportunity of the laity for actively and personally assisting in the spread of the gospel. But how many Christians there are who say they cannot teach or do other Sunday School work; and, when the truth of their excuse is searched out, it is found to be simply their unwillingness to give the time required for success in the work! Such Christians may be faithful in church attendance -- especially in the morning service of the church, but they savor of a tendency to stop with the minimum.

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DUTY DRIVES

Years ago a minister friend of mine asked some little boys to ride with him in his carriage. Upon inquiry he found the little fellows were attending the Catholic parochial school for the first session, and that the term was not yet half over. "How much have you already learned?" asked the minister. The little boys said they had learned The Lord's Prayer, the Twenty-third Psalm, Hail Mary, Benedictus, and several things besides, And upon the preacher's insistence they both recited all they had named without hesitation and without mistake. When the minister reported the matter, I asked how he accounted for the unusual progress of these Catholic children in the matter of religious education as compared with the progress made by Protestant children. His explanation was that our method makes the learning of religious truths voluntary, while the Catholic method

makes it obligatory. "And," said he, "it is evident that people respond better to the driving of duty than to the pleadings of privilege."

It is all very well for us to talk of our delight in the law of God and of our liberty in doing Christian service -- if we keep the law and render service. But neither delight that makes careless nor liberty that deteriorates into license is a commendation of the doctrines upon which it presumes to rest. "Government," it has been said, "is better justified by the type of citizens it tends to produce than by the efficiency with which it operates." This is why poor democracy is better than good dictatorship. And this is the same way in the Christian life. The purpose of the Christian agencies is not to produce puppets who jump when a string is pulled, but to make intelligent Christians who do well because of their love for God and their interest in the progress of His kingdom. And in spite of the fact that sometimes there are elements of discouragement, it still remains that the highest type of Christian character is produced under conditions requiring the exercise of the highest motives.

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LOPSIDED CHRISTIANS

Dr. Beverly Carradine says the presence of fanaticism is indicated by the tendency to develop some one virtue to the overshadowing of other virtues. One may go in so strong for courage that he ends by being cruel. Or one may lay so much stress upon mercy that he ends by being tolerant of evil. One may make so much of industry and attention to business that he ends up in missing prayer meeting and other services of the church. One may make so much of his private and home religion that he fails to do his part in the maintaining of the church and in service for the salvation of his neighbors. In a yet closer canvass, it may appear that one can devote himself so much to one branch of service that he neglects all others. It would not be amiss at times to dub certain as "Good Sunday morning Christians," or as "Good big meeting Christians," or as "Good Sunday School Christians," or as "Paying Christians," or as "Praying Christians," meaning in each case that the person in question is good at the one branch of service and indifferent toward all the rest.

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WALK, LOOKING ALL AROUND

St. Paul exhorted Christians to "walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15). That word circumspectly is very full of meaning. It is said to have been used originally to describe the hunter who set forth into the forest, He was told to "walk, looking all around." This was necessary in his own defense, for he might meet a foe face to face or an enemy might slip up behind him or a snake might strike from the grass at his feet or a leopard might pounce down from the tree above his head. And his life might well depend upon his vigilance. Also the very game which he sought might be too wily to come to his hand, and he must needs be "full of eyes" in order to succeed in his quest. It does not require much inventive genius to see how this applies to the Christian course. The demand of us all is that we should "strive to excel in this grace also," as Paul exhorted the Corinthians with reference to the gift of liberality in giving, It is not enough that we should be

concerned for one point of excellence in life and service, but that we should strive to be well balanced and complete.

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SYMPTOMS NOT THE DISEASE

In his book called "We" Lindbergh tells of his experiences in "barnstorming" in the days when flying was a novelty. He says it often happened, when he was taking off in a faulty plane with a passenger who was going aloft for the first time, that the engine would show weakness to such a degree that he would scarcely be able to rise above a telephone line or a grove of trees. Yet his passenger would be indifferent and would wave happily at his friends on the ground below. But when they were up several thousand feet, if the engine missed and sputtered that same passenger would show signs of panic. But the truth was that there was much more danger of a crackup at the faulty take-off than in that incidental fault in the engine when there were so many chances of getting the motor back to good behavior, or at least to make a successful forced landing.

And it often happens that people think to cure themselves by taking "fever powders," ignoring the fact that the high fever is but a symptom of something more fundamentally wrong. It even happens that we are sometimes more exercised over a rash on the skin, which we can see, than over a hidden cancer in the liver.

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GETTING DOWN TO FUNDAMENTALS

Often men prefer "rules of thumb" because they can keep these with but little heart. It was thus with the ancient Pharisees. Of them it was said, "They draw nigh unto me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." It is possible to print a list covering the items which ordinarily make demands upon the time of a Christian. That list might well contain the following:

1. Time every day for private devotion -- Bible reading and prayer.
2. Time every day for family devotion.
3. Time every day for a period of meditation upon the goodness of God and our love for Him and duty to Him.
4. Faithful attendance at all the services of the church in something of the following order of importance:
 - (1) The Sunday morning worship service.
 - (2) The midweek prayer meeting.
 - (3) The Sunday school.

- (4) The Sunday evening evangelistic service.
- (5) The special revival meeting services.
- (6) Other special meetings in the church.
- (7) Time for visitation and conversation on religious matters with neighbors, friends, and strangers.

And I think such a list is useful to any Christian. I suggest that we each make such a list. Let the list contain just the items which we ourselves think should be included; and then let us grade ourselves as stewards of God's time, and see if we really give enough of that precious stuff that life is made of to indicate that we know we do not own our days but hold them only as stewards of God.

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WE REALLY HAVE PLENTY OF TIME

It may be we are more or less sincere in offering that threadbare excuse, "I just don't have time," when we are called upon to do something for God. But the fact is we each one have all the time there is. It is just a question of what claim on our time we give the priority. We have time to sleep and eat and work at our daily vocation, and if we really thought God's claim important we might take a little time from our hours of sleep -- many people spend far too much time asleep. Or we might cut down on the time spent in eating. Or we might use the work of God as a time of recreation, and save on that score. Oh, yes, we have the time, all right. We have twenty-four hours of time every day; and if we gave a tithe of it to God that would be two hours and forty minutes out of the twenty-four, and if even a reasonable percentage of God's people would give this much time to God and His work the Church would enter upon a new era of influence and power. "But," one may say, "I give God the Sabbath, and that is a seventh of my time." No, God gives us the Sabbath; for "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." There is no greater boon to the order of men's lives than the recurring day of rest which the Sabbath provides. You cannot give the Sabbath, for it is already God's day; and, if you don't allow Him to have it, you cheat yourself and all for whom you are concerned. Observe God's Sabbath, even as you pay your tithe. And, having done your minimum duty by acknowledging that God is the owner of time and you but His steward, take care how you dispose of that which He has left in your keeping.

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"PASTIME" AND "KILLING TIME"

When I was a lad I saw my first friendly game of cards. Those taking part in it had been brought up in homes where cards and card games were taboo. So they felt the need of self-defense, and one after the other expressed the opinion that there was no harm in cards so long as the players did not gamble, and they all agreed that card playing is just "an innocent pastime." The expression

impressed me as I stood by for a while and watched these intelligent people use that game with which it is said a crazy king was wont to amuse himself, which was the occasion for the invention of the "deck of cards." Even as a child I could not miss observing that every one of these persons had need of all his time for useful work or for reading and self-improvement. The sight was rather gruesome to me. Here were intelligent people growing older every minute and yet finding time so unimportant that they could willingly do something useless in order to make them insensible of the ticking of the clock. Here is "pastime" -- that is, just doing something trifling and unimportant to keep from meeting the serious responsibilities of life.

Recreation is lawful so long as it is a means to an end. But it is sinful just as soon as it becomes an end in itself. We all know the body requires exercise, as well as food and rest, and we are obligated to see that the body has the exercise it requires. But sports soon become sport. That is, exercise becomes "pastime" when followed even just a little too long.

Some are not content merely to let time pass. They must descend to "killing time." This they do when they give over to harmful indulgences like liquor, tobacco, gluttony, dancing, worldly amusements and excessive time to company. These things set the progress of life back, even while the clock of life goes forward. Think of a person whose tenure is as short as ours is, indifferently letting time pass or, worse still, killing time, the very stuff that life is made of, in doing things that would be better left undone! The whole world abhors the suicide. "He had no right," we all say, "to take the life God gave him. He is a murderer, even though it was his own life he squandered." But the difference between the suicide and the man who "passes time" or "kills time" is just a difference of point and degree. The suicide took away the last end of his life: the time-killer took away from the beginning or the middle. And, if one is going to shorten his life, it might be better that he should cut off his latter end than that he should clip from his youth or his time of power. But we have no thought of assuaging the sin of the suicide. Rather, we just call attention to the fact that, as stewards of God's time, we must give account of our days and hours, no matter at what point they appear in our life's span.

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MY TIME IS ALL SPOKEN FOR

A Christian woman once came to Evangelist Sam Jones complaining that her good friends were insistent on her attending the theater with them. She said she had never gone as yet, and that she had no desire to go. But she said she disliked very much to displease and offend her friends, and she asked the evangelist for suggestions as to how she could put her friends off without appearing rude and unappreciative. "Tell them," said Sam Jones, "that your time is all spoken for. Tell them that, of course, your Sundays are all occupied with Sunday School and Church. Monday night you must be home with your family. Tuesday night you have set aside to help the children with the Sunday School lesson. Wednesday night the whole family goes to prayer meeting. Thursday night for visiting you have reserved visiting the sick and ministering to the needy of your acquaintance. Friday night you attend a cottage prayer meeting. Saturday night you must see to the children's baths and arrange their clothing so they will be up and ready for Sunday School the next morning. If they ask you how long this program is to continue, tell them it looks like you will not have a night to spare for at least one thousand years. Tell them the duties and privileges of the

Christian life are so many and so pressing and so precious that you are more likely to seek for another day and another night in which to worship God and do good than you are to give away any of the good days and nights which God has allowed you in this world."

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THE PLOW AND THE ALTAR

In the center of the ancient Roman silver coin was the image of an ox. Behind the ox was a plow. In front of this was an altar. There were no words, but the people read the picture, and the picture said, "I am ready either for service or for sacrifice, as my master wills." And that is the right position for you and me. Serious sickness and death may call us to the burning. But health and opportunity point to the plow. And we cannot be ready for either the plow or the altar except we be prepared for either and for both.

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WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

The biologist may be interested in a search for the life germ in the human body. The chronologist may give attention to statistics relating to longevity, but the Christian is interested in those measures of life which, multiplied together, make up volume. Methuselah lived a long time, but his life was apparently just a straight line; and a line, no matter how far extended, does not constitute volume. Enoch, the father of Methuselah, lived deep and high and wide; and these dimensions, multiplied by a length much less than half of that of his son, constituted a volume so great that the earthly plane could not contain it.

To the Christian, life is a trust. It is not a gift delivered to him without conditions. It is not a possession to be held, used, wasted, or given away without any other's consent. It is a trust committed to a trustee, but protected by principles given by the Owner, and conditioned upon a plan for present and final accounting to God for its proper use. God holds the element of time in His own will; but He leaves to us the other dimensions, under His benevolent superintendency, And when we come into His presence at the end of life's day, the question, What is your life? will not be satisfied with an answer based upon speculation, but will demand, as did the lord of those to whom he had committed the talents, an account of the use made of the time allowed.

We are accustomed to think of judgment as all future and as all based upon the arbitrary will of God. But the fact is, we are being judged day by day, and there is no escape from the decree of life, seeing their rewards and penalties are written right in the constitution of things. It is as firmly engraved in the constitution of things that "he that sins must suffer" as it is written in the Bible that "the soul that sinneth it shall die." Likewise, God has written clearly upon our bodies, minds, and hearts, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," just as He has written such a text in His holy Word.

Christian, what do you do with the time God has entrusted to you?

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"I HAVE MISSED IT AT LAST"

No doubt we have all heard of the dying man who cried, "I have missed it at last!" But his was the cry of despair, and contains only a partial truth. He did indeed miss it at last, but he also missed it before that. We may not know why God gives one person only a little time and to another a very large portion. That secret is hidden in the councils of the great God. But we may be assured that none of us have any more time than we need and should have. Our faith is that those who lived the shortest time yet lived enough here that they may live in heaven forever, On the other hand, those who live the longest may come to the end of their day with their probation unfinished. God takes the responsibility for the dying infant. But He leaves to us responsibility for the living adult. One will not likely miss it at last if he did not also miss it somewhere earlier. It is not alone the last hour of life that counts. Every hour counts. Perhaps we have prayed against the danger of missing it at last. But there is just one way to make sure of that, and that is to make sure we do not miss it at first or in the middle or anywhere along the line. To be sure we do not miss it at last we must not miss it anywhere along the line.

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ON THE DEVIL'S TERRITORY

R. L. Averill used to tell of a man who dreamed he went to a dance, "just to look on." He was an earnest Christian, but went to the dance. In the midst of the hilarity, as the course of things went in the dream, a dreadful calamity fell upon the crowd, and many of those present were instantly killed. Among the killed was the righteous dreamer. The devil came to take charge of the souls of the dead dancers and, while gathering them up, laid hold also upon the soul of the onlooker. "But," the good man complained, "you can't take me. I belong to the Lord." But the devil replied, "You may belong to God, but I have found you on my territory, and I shall take you now as a trespasser."

Perhaps there should be another side to this story. For surely there must be some advantage in being on God's territory. At least, let us take this lesson: God's people should live always on God's territory. There is no time when anyone is immune to death. Suppose you should die on the golf field on Sunday morning when you should be in church. Suppose you should be killed in a wreck while out joy riding on Sunday afternoon. Suppose you should be struck by lightning in your home during the service hour on Sunday night. What would men and angels think if your heart should stop on Wednesday night and you delinquent from prayer meeting? How would it look to earthly and heavenly observers if you should be found at some place of amusement or even in your home or in some mart of trade when the evangelist and the good people were pouring out their hearts for the salvation of souls, and you not at the revival service?

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"THOMAS WAS NOT THERE"

Jesus came and stood in the midst of His disciples one night soon after His resurrection from the dead, and there made himself known. "But Thomas was not there," and Thomas has borne the unsavory cognomen, "Doubting Thomas," largely because he was not where he was supposed to be that night. For, if he had been there, the evidence that satisfied the others would have convinced him. Thomas was the principal loser, but others lost too. And it is so with us, God has provided that things that are best for us are also good for others. We are not to be cursed that others may be blessed, but it is as Abraham prayed, "Bless me, and make me a blessing."

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A SERMON TO THE EMPTY PEWS

A preacher blessed with a vivid imagination preached a "Sermon to the Empty Pews," and in connection said some very helpful things to and about the people who should have been sitting in those pews. Seeing a notice in the paper asking for "good, used church pews," a pastor reasoned that his church had the pews all right, but thought they had not been used enough to make it reasonable to sell them at reduced price. Whose fault is this woeful want of church attendance? Perhaps it is partly the preachers' fault. But it is not enough that a Christian should go to church just because the preacher pleases him. The real fault is that too many professing Christians do not take sufficiently to heart that God expects them to "make full proof of their ministry," as well as He demands it of the preacher.

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IF I SHOULD DIE TODAY

In many a house there is that motto, "Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." And on the negative side of the stewardship of time, there is that exhortation, "Say nothing you would not like to be saying when Jesus comes; do nothing you would not like to be doing when Jesus comes; go nowhere you would not like to be found when Jesus comes." But the negative is only the background. The picture itself must be painted in colors of actual words and thoughts and deeds. It is not enough to abstain from things forbidden. The scriptural stewardship of time makes it obligatory that we should live positively. If Jesus tarries, I know I shall die. It could be that I will die today. And if I should die today my record would have to stand without opportunity for revision, I may have more time, but I have had much time already. The question is, What have I done with the time God has given me? Still I would not face the past in despondency -- that can do no good. I turn now to claim the present and to face the future. I have found I always do better when I set a standard for myself. So I vow to account myself but a steward of the time allowed me, and yet I pray that God will give me grace to value that time as fully as I would if I were its owner. I will, henceforth, strive always to be employed, and to be usefully employed. I shall count my whole day and my week and my years as belonging to God. I shall testify to my relation as a steward by observing His Sabbath. Then I shall account His business -- the business of His Church -- as having priority over sleep, time for eating, time for exercise, and every employment whatsoever. And if I should die today, I hope it can be known of God and reported among men and angels that I made use of the time God gave me as becometh a good steward. And, if this can be so, I have no doubt that, having lived this life in such

a manner as to justify my probation, He will mercifully, and entirely through His grace, commit to me time without limit -- everlasting life.

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THE END