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2700-PLUS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS (N-TOPICS)
Compiled and Arranged Topically by Duane V. Maxey

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NAME -- GOOD (REPUTATION)

1593 -- HE RENOUNCED HIS ATHEISM

Years ago the communist government in China commissioned an author to write a biography of Hudson Taylor with the purpose of distorting the facts and presenting him in a bad light. They wanted to discredit the name of this consecrated missionary of the gospel. As the author was doing his research, he was increasingly impressed by Taylor's saintly character and godly life, and he found it extremely difficult to carry out his assigned task with a clear conscience. Eventually, at the risk of losing his life, he laid aside his pen, renounced his atheism, and received Jesus as his personal Savior. Whether we realize it or not, our example leaves an impression on others. Let's ask God to help us make it one of love, faith, and purity of life.

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NAME -- GOOD (REPUTATION)

1594 -- YOU GOT IT FROM YOUR FATHER

You got it from your Father, it was all he had to give. So it's yours to use and cherish, for as long as you may live. If you lose the watch he gave you, it can always be replaced. But a black mark on your name, son, can never be erased. It was clean the day you took it, and a worthy name to bear, when he got it from his father, there was no dishonor there. So make sure you guard it wisely, after all is said and done. You'll be glad the name is spotless when you give it to your son.

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NAME -- OF THE LORD, REVERENCED

1595 -- HIS LAST WORDS

Some years ago, in Germany, a young man lay upon the operating table of a hospital. A skilled surgeon stood near, a group of students round about. Presently, bending over the patient, the surgeon said: "My friend, if you wish to say anything, you now have the opportunity, but I must warn you that your words will be the last words that you will ever utter. (He had cancer of the tongue.) Think well, therefore, what you wish to say." You can readily imagine that such a

statement at such a time would give pause to anyone. The young man therefore waited, apparently lost in deep thought. A deep solemnity settled over the faces of the onlookers. What words would he choose for such an occasion? The students bent eagerly forward. Some time passed, and then the lips at last parted, and at the sound of his voice you could have seen tears swim in the eyes of those present: "Thank God, Jesus Christ!" -- Evangelical Visitor

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NATION

1596 -- HE PRAYS FOR THE COUNTRY

An Indiana farmer took his family to the nation's capital to see how their government worked. After visiting the House of Representatives, they went to the Senate gallery, where the chaplain of the Senate was speaking.

"Daddy," asked the farmer's ten-year-old daughter, "does the chaplain pray for the Senate?"

"No," said the farmer. "He comes in, looks at the Senators, and then prays for the country."
-- Reader's Digest

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NATION

1597 -- IF IT CEASES TO BE GOOD

In the 1830's Alexis de Tocqueville toured America. When his tour had been completed, he made this observation: "I have toured America, and I have seen most of what you offer. I've seen the richness of the fields and the wealth of your mines. I've seen your industrial might, the beauties of the rivers, the streams, the lakes, and the grandeur of the mountains. I've noticed the abundance of the forests and the marvelous climate with which you are blessed. In none of these things did I see the cause for the greatness of America. It wasn't until I went into your churches that I saw the reason for America's greatness. America is great because America is good; and as long as America is good, America will be great. If it ever ceases to be good, it will cease to be great."

* * *

NATION

1598 -- MENDING THE BELL

Many are unaware that the Declaration of Independence did not come into being until a day of fasting and prayer had been observed. Appointed by the Continental Congress, it was kept by all the colonies on May 17, 1776. At that time in our history, God and the Bible were given more reverence and recognition than they are today. When the nation was finally born, our forefathers

rang the Liberty Bell with great enthusiasm, and a legend says that it cracked as they zealously proclaimed their freedom. Years later the White Chapel Foundry of London offered to recast the huge carillon, but their proposal was of course refused. Apparently the symbolic value of the damaged bell, which recalls the religious and patriotic fervor of those early days, is something that America still wishes to preserve. This in itself is good; but in view of our nation's moral decline, the crack may also suggest a break in our basic ideals and a serious defect in our spiritual attitudes. We can remedy the situation and avert the judgment of the Lord only by repentance, prayer, and a return to the faith of our fathers. In this sense, there is no time for delay in "mending the bell."

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NATION

1599 -- ON THIS DATE

On July 4, 1776, George III wrote in his diary, "Nothing of importance happened today." He, of course, had no way of knowing what had occurred that day 3,000 miles away in the colonies, in Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in particular. Other things have happened on July 4. In 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots, abdicated. In 1754, George Washington surrendered Fort Necessity to the French and Indians. In 1802, the United States Military Academy opened at West Point. In 1817, construction of the Erie Canal began. In 1821, slavery was abolished in New York State. In 1826, Stephen Foster was born and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson died, and in 1831 James Monroe died. In 1845, Texas voted for annexation to the United States. In 1848, the cornerstone of the Washington Monument was laid. In 1862, on a historic (literally) cruise and picnic, Lewis Carroll made up the story of a little girl named Alice who falls down a rabbit hole and has wondrous adventures. In 1863, Vicksburg, Mississippi, surrendered to the Union army. In 1866, half of Portland, Maine, was destroyed by fire. In 1872, Calvin Coolidge was born. In 1884, the Statue of Liberty was presented to the United States by France. In 1946, the Philippines were granted their independence by the United States. In 1954, meat rationing ended in England (after 15 years). In 1976 the U. S. bicentennial was observed.

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NEGATIVISM

1600 -- WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

Some people are so negative! Did you hear about the farmer that had a brilliant dog? He had a neighbor that just absolutely was negative, no matter what. If it was raining, the farmer would say to his neighbor, "Boy, look at it rain, God's sort of washing it clean." "Yeah, but if it keeps up it's gonna flood." Then the sun would come out and he'd say, "If it keeps that up, it's gonna just scorch the crops." The farmer thought, "What am I gonna do to win this guy?" So he trained his dog to walk on water. He didn't tell his neighbor, he just took him duck hunting. Boom! Boom! They brought these ducks out of the sky, and said to his dog, "Go get 'em." The dog went

across, picked them up, and hopped back in the boat, nothing wet -- just his paws. The farmer said, "What do you think of that?" The neighbor said, "He can't swim, can he?"

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NEGLECT -- OF DUTY

1601 -- HER RELIGION WAS IN A TRUNK

A little girl had been rummaging in her mother's trunk. There she found a church letter which her mother had neglected to present to the church into whose neighborhood she had moved. The little explorer rushed into her mother's presence shouting: "Oh, mamma, I have found your religion in your trunk!" There is a needle-like point in that story for a great many people. That mother had confessed Christ some time, somewhere, but her life had been such a repudiation of her profession that even her own child was surprised to accidentally come across her "religion". --

Topical Illustrations

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NEGLECT -- OF DUTY

1602 -- TOLD BY AN EPISCOPALIAN MINISTER

A few years ago, I was engaged as a missionary in the west, and one afternoon I alighted from the train at a small station, and, after walking a short way, I accosted an old farmer and told him the nature of my business. The old man seemed quite pleased, and ventured the information that he was an Episcopalian, and wanted me to hold a meeting at his house, a large, roomy farmhouse, to which he at once conducted me. He showed me every kindness possible, and with his team drove all about the scattered neighborhood, informing the people of the service, which I was glad to hold. We had nearly a hundred out in the evening, and all seemed very interested and attentive, although I could see that few of them, if any, had ever attended such a service before.

The next morning, as I was leaving, I thanked my host for his hospitality and asked him what parish he belonged to. "Don't know nothin 'bout any parish," was his answer. "Well, what diocese do you belong to?" I inquired. "There ain't nothin of that sort in this part of the country that I have ever heard of," he replied. "But who confirmed you?" said I. "Nobody," he returned. "But didn't you tell me you were an Episcopalian?" I asked him in astonishment. "Oh, yes," said the old man, "I'll tell you how that is. Last spring I went down to New Orleans visitin, and while I was there I went ter church, and it happened ter be an Episcopalian one, and among other things, I heard, 'em say that, they'd jest undone the things they'd oughter done, and done them things they hadn't oughter done, and I said to myself, 'that's just my fix, too,' and since then I've always considered myself an Episcopalian." "Well," said I, as I shook the old man's hand, "if your ideas of an Episcopalian are correct, we are the largest denomination in the world." This illustrates the position of many in regard to the missionary cause. They claim to be missionaries, but by virtue of what they have left undone, they are omissionaries. -- Topical Illustrations

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NEGLECT -- OF PRAYER

1603 -- HIS AX BECAME DULL

Some years ago a young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job.

"That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree." The young man stepped forward and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "Start Monday!" Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday rolled by, and Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your paycheck on the way out today." Startled, he replied, "I thought you paid on Friday." "Normally we do," answered the foreman, "but we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last on Wednesday." "But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!" The foreman, sensing the boy's integrity thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your ax?" The young man replied, "I've been working too hard to take the time." How about you? Have you been too busy, too hard at work to sharpen your ax? Prayer is the hone that gives you that sharp edge. Without it, the more work you do, the duller you'll get. -- William Boyd

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NEGLECT -- OF PRAYER

1604 -- I WON'T BOTHER YOU AGAIN

The following story appeared in "The Prairie Overcomer:" A fisherman who was out of fellowship with the Lord was at sea with his godless companions when a storm came up and threatened to sink their ship. His friends begged him to pray; but he demurred, saying, "It's been a long time since I've done that or even entered a church." At their insistence, however, he finally cried out, "O Lord, I haven't asked anything of You in 15 years, and if You help us now and bring us safely to land, I promise I won't bother You again for another 15!" Although this story at first evokes a smile, it is sobering to realize that prayer is often an escape mechanism rather than a way of life. This may be true even of believers who call on God only when they've reached the end of their rope and there seems to be no other way to solve their problems.

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NEGLECT -- OF SALVATION

1605 -- HE WAS THE OBJECT OF JOKES AND TEASING

Many years ago Orson Wells produced a radio drama of an imaginary attack from outer space. A student at Campbell College in North Carolina turned on his radio midway through the

broadcast and did not realize he was hearing a fictitious report. When the announcer vividly described fire falling upon the earth, the student recalled some sermons from his boyhood years and concluded that the end of the world had come. He grabbed the telephone and called home, saying: "Mama, Mama, have you got your radio on? The fire is falling, the end of the world is coming, and I'm not ready to meet God!" The next morning he was the object of jokes and teasing around the campus. But in the chapel service a godly Bible teacher took the podium and said, "I understand that one of the boys got a lot of ribbing because he got scared listening to the radio program last night. But, young men and women, what if it had truly been the end of the world last night -- would you be ready?"

* * *

NEW MAN

1606 -- THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,
And all of our poor selfish grief,
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never put on again.

We should find all the things we intended to do,
But forgot and remembered too late;
Little praises unspoken, little promises broken,
And all of the thousand and one
Little duties neglected, that might have perfected,
The day for one less fortunate.

It wouldn't be possible not to be kind,
In the Land of Beginning Again,
And the ones we misjudged, and the ones whom we grudged,
Their moments of victory here,
Would find in the grasp of our loving handclasp,
More than penitent lips could explain.

So I wish that there were some wonderful place,
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches,
And all of our poor selfish grief,
Could be dropped, like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never put on again.

-- Louise Fletcher Tarkington

There is such a land. It is called Regeneration. We enter that land spiritually when we are born again, and all who are thus born again shall enter that land eternally when Jesus comes again. In the eternal Regeneration of Christ's Kingdom, earthly things shall "be dropped, like an old shabby coat at the door, and never put on again." Hallelujah! -- Duane V. Maxey

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NEW MAN -- RENEWED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1607 -- THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THE "GOLDEN RULE"

An anecdote published many years ago of the Indian chief, Teedyuscung, king of the Delawares, is too valuable to be lost. One evening he was sitting at the fireside of a friend. Both of them were silently looking at the fire, indulging their own reflections. At length, the silence was broken by the friend, who said, "I will tell thee what I have been thinking of. I have been thinking of a rule delivered by the Author of the Christian religion which, from its excellence, we call the 'Golden Rule.'" "Stop," said Teedyuscung, "don't praise it to me, but rather tell me what it is, and let me think for myself. I do not wish you to tell me of its excellence. Tell me what it is." "It is for one man to do to another as he would have the other do to him." "That's impossible! It cannot be done," Teedyuscung immediately replied.

Silence again ensued. Teedyuscung walked about the room. In about a quarter of an hour, he came to his friend with smiling countenance, and said, "Brother, I have been thoughtful of what you told me. If the Great Spirit that made man would give him a new heart, he could do as you say, but not else. Thus, the Indian identified the only means by which man can fulfill the "Golden Rule." -- Dictionary Of Illustrations

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NOW

1608 -- A MISTAKE MOODY REGRETTED

Sunday night, October 8, 1871, D. L. Moody preached to the largest congregation that he had yet addressed in Chicago. His text was: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Matt 27:22 At the close of the sermon, he said, "I wish you would take this text home with you and turn it over in your minds during the week, and next Sabbath we will come to Calvary and the Cross and we will decide what to do with Jesus of Nazareth. Then Sankey began to sing the hymn:

Today the Saviour calls;
For refuge fly;
The storm of justice falls,
And death is nigh.

But the hymn was never finished, for while Sankey was singing there was the rush and roar of fire engines on the street outside, and before morning Chicago lay in ashes. Moody, to his dying day, was full of regret that he had told that congregation to come next Sabbath and decide what to do with Jesus. "I have never since dared," he said, "to give an audience a week to think of their salvation. If they were lost, they might rise up in judgment against me. I have never seen that congregation since."

"I will never meet those people until I meet them in another world. But I want to tell you of one lesson that I learned that night, which I have never forgotten, and that is -- when I preach, to press Christ upon the people then and there, and try to bring them to a decision on the spot. I would rather have that right hand cut off than to give an audience a week now to decide what to do with Jesus." -- McCartney

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NOW

1609 -- NOW OR NEVER

Sometimes in our lives, it is "now or never." The crucial moment has arrived. We must act now, or forever forfeit the opportunity. There comes such a time regarding one's salvation -- a moment which, if we use it rightly, will result in our eternal salvation -- a moment which, if we fail to act, will result in our eternal damnation. The following story illustrates vividly the necessity of acting immediately, and decisively, when the crucial, "now or never" moment arrives:

Gilliatt wandered among the smaller rocks where the "Durande," ten weeks before, had first struck upon the sunken reef. For two months he had lived almost entirely upon crabs. This time, however, the crabs were wanting. The tempest had driven them into their solitary retreats, and they had not yet mustered up courage to venture abroad. As Gilliatt was trying to make up his mind to be content with sea urchins, a little clattering noise at his feet aroused his attention. A large crab, startled by his approach, had just dropped into a pool.

He chased the crab along the base of the rock; but the crab moved fast, and suddenly disappeared. It had buried itself in some crevice under the rock. As he suspected, there was an opening in which the creature had evidently taken refuge. It was more than a crevice; it was a kind of porch. The water beneath it was not deep, and the bottom, covered with large pebbles, was plainly visible. Holding his knife between his teeth, Gilliatt descended, by the aid of his feet and hands, from the upper part of the escarpment, and leaped into the water. It reached almost to his shoulders.

He made his way through the porch, and found himself in a blind passage, with a roof shaped like a rude arch over his head. The crab was nowhere visible. He noticed, above the level of the water, and within reach of his hand, a horizontal fissure. It seemed to him probable that the crab had taken refuge there, and he plunged his hand in as far as he was able, and groped in that dusky aperture. Suddenly he felt himself seized by the arm. A strange, indescribable horror thrilled him. Some living thing, thin, rough, flat, cold, and slimy had twisted itself round his naked arm, in

the dark depth below. Its pressure was like a tightening cord, its steady persistence like that of a screw.

In another instant the same mysterious spiral form had wound around his wrist and elbow, and had reached his shoulder. A sharp point penetrated beneath the armpit. Gilliatt recoiled, but he had scarcely power to move! He was, as it were, nailed to the place. He made a desperate effort to withdraw his arm; but he only succeeded in disturbing his persecutor, which wound itself tighter. It was supple as leather, strong as steel, cold as night.

A second form, sharp, elongated, and narrow issued from the crevice like a tongue out of monstrous jaws. It seemed to lick his naked body; then suddenly stretching out, it became longer and thinner, as it crept over his skin, and wound itself around him. At the same time a terrible sensation of pain, utterly unlike any he had ever known, made all his muscles contract.

A third long undulating shape issued from the hole in the rock, seemed to feel its way around his body to lash itself around his ribs like a cord, and fix itself there. Intense agony is dumb. Gilliatt uttered no cry. There was sufficient light for him to see the repulsive forms which had wound themselves about him.

A fourth ligature, but this one swift as an arrow, darted towards his stomach, and wound about him. It was impossible to sever or tear away the slimy bands which were twisted tightly around his body, and which were adhering to it at a number of points. Each of these points was the focus of frightful and singular pangs. It seemed as if innumerable small mouths were devouring him at the same time.

A fifth long, slimy, ribbon shaped strip issued from the hole. It passed over the others, and wound itself tightly around his chest. The compression increased his sufferings. He could scarcely breathe. Suddenly a large, round, flattened, glutinous mass issued from beneath the crevice. It was the center; the five thongs were attached to it like spokes to the hub of a wheel. On the opposite side of this disgusting monster appeared the beginning of three other similar tentacles, the ends of which remained under the rock. In the middle of this slimy mass were two eyes. These eyes were fixed on Gilliatt. He recognized the Devil-Fish.

It is difficult for those who have not seen it to believe in the existence of the devil-fish. Compared with this creature the ancient hydras are insignificant. The devil-fish has no muscular organization, no menacing cry, no breastplate, no horn, no dart, no claw, no tail, with which to hold or bruise; no cutting fins or wings with nails, no prickles, no sword, no electric discharge, no poison, no claws, no beak, no jaws. Yet, he is of all creatures most formidably armed.

This frightful monster which is so often encountered amid the rocks in the open sea is of grayish color, about five feet long, and about the thickness of a man's arm. It is ragged in outline, and in shape strongly resembles a closed umbrella without a handle. This irregular mass advances slowly towards you. Suddenly, it opens and eight radii issue abruptly from around a face with two eyes. These radii are alive; their undulation is like lambent flames. Its folds strangle; its contact paralyzes. It has the aspect of gangrened or scabrous flesh. It is a monstrous embodiment of disease.

Underneath each of the eight antennae are two rows of suckers, decreasing in size—the largest ones near the head, the smallest at the extremities. Each row contains 25 of these. There are, therefore, 50 suckers to each feeler and the creature possesses 400 in all. These small tubes are capable of piercing to a depth of more than an inch. It is with the sucking apparatus that it attacks. The victim is oppressed by a vacuum drawing at numberless points; it is not a clawing or a biting, but an indescribable scarification. A tearing of the flesh is terrible, but less terrible than a sucking of the blood. Such was the creature in whose power Gilliatt had fallen.

Of the eight arms of the devilfish, three adhered to the rock, while five encircled Gilliatt. In this way, clinging to the granite on one side, and to its human prey on the other, it chained him to the rock. Two hundred and fifty suckers were upon him, tormenting him with agony and loathing. As we have said, it is impossible to tear one's self from the clutches of the devilfish. The attempt only results in a firmer grasp. Gilliatt had but one resource, his open knife was in his left hand. The antennae of the devilfish cannot be cut; it is a leathery substance upon which a knife makes no impression; it slips under the blade; to sever it would be to wound severely the victim's own flesh.

The creature is formidable, but there is a way of resisting it. The fishermen of Sark know it. Porpoises know it, too. They have a way of biting the devil-fish which decapitates it. In fact, its only vulnerable part is its head. Gilliatt was not ignorant of this fact. He had never seen a devilfish of this size. His first encounter was with one of the largest species. Any other man would have been overwhelmed with terror.

With the devilfish, as with a furious bull, there is a certain instant in the conflict which must be seized. It is the instant when the bull lowers his neck; it is the instant when the devil-fish advances its head. The movement is rapid. One who loses that moment is irrevocably doomed.

Gilliatt looked at the monster, which seemed to return the look. Suddenly, it loosened from the rock its sixth antenna, and darting it at him, seized him by the arm. At the same moment, it advanced its head with a quick movement. In one second more its mouth would have fastened on his breast. He avoided the antenna, and at the very instant the monster darted forward, he struck it with his knife. There were two convulsive movements in opposite directions -- that of the devil-fish, and that of its prey. The movements were as rapid as lightning.

Gilliatt had plunged the blade of his knife into the flat, slimy substance, and with a rapid movement, like the flourish of a whiplash in the air, had described a circle round the two eyes, and wrenched off the head as a man would draw a tooth. The struggle was ended. The slimy bands relaxed. The air-pump being broken, the vacuum was destroyed. The 400 suckers, deprived of their sustaining power, dropped at once from the man and the rock. The mass sank to the bottom of the water.

Breathless with the struggle, Gilliatt could dimly discern on the stones at his feet two shapeless, slimy heaps, the head on one side, the rest of the monster on the other. Nevertheless, fearing a convulsive return of the death-agony, he recoiled to be out of reach of the dread tentacles. But the monster was dead. -- Victor Hugo, "Battling The Sea Monster," Reader's Digest, September, 1930

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NOW

1610 -- ONLY A STEP, BUT THE TIME IS NOW

Entering a crowded street car, with his Bible under his arm, a young minister soon became the brunt of sneering remarks and wisecracks from a group of fellows. These remarks continued, and when the minister left the car, one youth said, "Say, mister, how far is it to heaven?" The Christian replied, "It is only a step; will you take it now? -- Power

* * *

NOW

1611 -- SETTLED IN TIME

A young fellow heard a preacher in the other days and was greatly moved, and the preacher said: "When you have a religious impression, the time to act upon it is right then. The time when you hear God's call in the which you ought to respond is right then." And the young fellow walked down the aisle and publicly made his surrender to Christ saying: "It shall be right now that I take Christ as my Saviour." He went back to the sawmill in the mountains where he worked, and the boys said that next morning he sang all the morning. Religion in the heart makes men sing.

About noon his body was caught somehow in the machinery and crushed and mangled so that a little while thereafter he went away into dusty death. When they got him out he faintly said: "Send for the preacher, that preacher in the church house at the foot of the mountains last night."

The preacher fortunately was soon found. He hurried up the mountain to the mill, and he bent down by the side of the dying fellow and took his hand and said: "Charley, I have come. What would you like to say?" And with a smile on his face he faintly pressed the minister's hand and said: "Wasn't it a glorious thing that I settled it in time?"

Oh, my men, and women, my men and women, I beseech you in the great Saviour's name, turn your boat upstream before it is too late! "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation." Let it be your time, your day. -- George W. Truett

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NOW

1612 -- THREE PRAYERS OF AUGUSTINE

In the early days of his struggle toward the truth, Augustine made a prayer: "Lord, save me from my sins, but not quite yet." Then, sometime after that, he prayed: "Lord, save me from all my

sins, except one." Then came the final prayer: "Lord, save me from all my sins, and save me now!" It was when he made that final decision against evil, that the victory was his. There is no joy and strength and, for that matter, no peace like that which visits the soul which has taken an unconquerable resolve against that which is evil. -- McCartney

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THE END