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QUESTIONS OF CONSEQUENCE

By Harold L. Volk

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INSIDE BOOK-JACKET TEXT

Rev. Harold L. Volk who makes his home in Nampa, Idaho, is an evangelist of twenty years' experience. He has conducted revival campaigns in just about every state in his homeland and in several provinces of Canada. His hard-hitting evangelistic messages have established him as one of the dependable and successful evangelists in the Church of the Nazarene. He has a full schedule, year after year, of church revival and camp-meeting work. Besides this book, he has written a booklet "Is The Bible An Infallible Revelation?" which has had a wide sale.

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FOREWORD

The sermons in this volume are some I have preached in revivals and camp meetings. They were not originally planned for publication, but for public discourse. They are not offered to the reader as original material by the author, and credit is due many, many other preachers and writers for some of the thoughts included. It is hoped that the men quoted in these messages, whether it is by accident or design, will be long-suffering and merciful.

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01 -- WHERE ART THOU?

Genesis 3:9

This is the King calling His subject. The question is not to give information but to awaken. God need not call to find men. He knows where every man is. He knew where Adam was. God called Adam in order to arouse and convict him, the first sinner, and call him back to God.

It is not only God's first question to Adam, but it is God's question to every man. "Where art thou?" The question is worthy of our consideration today. Let us, therefore, consider it from several different standpoints, all of them scriptural, and see if we may find ourselves and seek the Lord.

* * *

I. Where Are You In Your Relation To God?

All men are God's by right of creation and He has the right to ask us the question of the text, relating it to every requirement He makes of men.

A. As to the new birth, where are you? "Ye must be born again," is applicable to all men, for by nature all are out of Christ. Life demands a rebirth. There is no other way for men to know God but by being born again. Sin is a terrible and a tragic fact, and only the new birth will free us from our sins. Being born again is being born of God, and, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9). Two truths are plainly apparent in that verse of scripture: first, the experience of the new birth -- "born of God"; second, the life of the new birth -- "doth not commit sin." Only thus may we become and remain the children of God. Jesus declared that the children of the devil do evil works, "Ye do the deeds of your father," referring to the devil. On the other hand, He said of the "born again," "Verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also."

The new birth makes all life new. It is marvelous how that property of "new" runs through the whole scheme of God's redemption. Jesus was born in a new fashion, against the laws of nature. He came living a new life, obedience to God. He came preaching a new message, forgiveness of sins. He came to give men a new heart, born again. He came to give His children a new song, redemption. He came to help man live a new life, freedom from sin. He came to prepare men for a new heaven, home. From the moment Jesus comes into one's life everything is new. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature... all things are become new."

John the Baptist said, in substance, "Do not put your trust in having Abraham as your father; rather, put it in the new birth. Do not ask for water baptism until there are manifest in your life fruits meet for repentance." In other words, he said, "Prove to me that you have repented by a newness of life; then I will baptize you, but not until then."

B. As to the New Testament ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, where are you? Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20). It is true that unregenerate men have no right to the ordinance of baptism or of the Lord's Supper, neither does the keeping of these things make one a Christian. But to the saved, the children of God, these good things are great blessings, and in the keeping of them is obedience to Christ. It certainly is inconsistent to order the preacher to go, teaching and baptizing, unless the intention is for the taught to receive teaching and baptism.

C. As to the Bible, where are you? The Bible is the Book of God, and as such it stands alone. It is the Grand Old Book of the world. There is enough contained in it to save the world. If its truth is rejected then there is no other word that can convince men of God, for, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16: 31). All other books are measured by the Bible. All men are measured by the Bible. All law finds its root in the Bible. It is truly the "quick," the living Word. It has traveled with man from land to land, from continent to continent, from nation to nation, from civilization to civilization. Within the last century man has completed his journey of encircling the world and, from the first step to the last sea crossing, the only book to accompany him is the Bible. Dr. A. J. Gordon said: "Westward the course of empire takes its way... from the valley of the Euphrates and the valley of the Nile, through the eccentric valley of the Jordan, by the isles of Greece, around the mountain ranges of Europe, across the trackless ocean, and from Plymouth Rock to

the Golden Gate. And the Bible is the only book which begins with humanity, continues with humanity, and standing today on the sloping hills of the farthest western boundary, lifts the prophetic torch of revelation and flashes forth the wonderful picture of 'a holy city' -- the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven."* [*System Bible Study, in the back of the book.]

Where else on earth may such heights of simple truth be found? The story of creation, the Ten Commandments, the twenty-third psalm, the Book of Isaiah, the Sermon on the Mount, the story of the prodigal son, faith in the eleventh of Hebrews, the Resurrection in I Corinthians, chapter fifteen! No wonder someone who had tested its truths by the strains of life cried in ecstasy:

Book of the ages I love thy pages:
Bathed with the tears of those who sorrow --
Bleached with the sweat of those who labor --
Scorched by the fires of persecution --
Worn by the fingers of meditation --
Cut and cursed by those who abhor thee --
Kissed and caressed by those who adore thee --
Book of the ages -- I love thy pages.

Where are you in relation to this Book?

D. Regarding the baptism with the Holy Ghost, where are you?

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed baptize you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

Have you received the Holy Ghost? Again and again has this question been asked. And it is well that it has, for the receiving of the Holy Ghost is every Christian's responsibility. We are commanded to tarry until we receive Him. Again, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). It is not enough to be good, and to do good; you must be filled with the Spirit of God. Not only is every Christian responsible for receiving the Holy Spirit, but every Christian needs the Holy Spirit -- needs Him for his own life, needs Him in his work for others. In the face of this great need is a great promise, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Where are you? Has this promise been fulfilled in your life?

E. Regarding the Great Commission, where are you?

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is not a command only for preachers and divinely called workers. It is every Christian's

commission. True, not all can go personally and preach, but those who cannot go personally can work and make money to support others who can go. This they are commanded to do. Their love for Christ compels them to obey the command. The need of the dark world requires them to obey. And failure in obedience to this commission convinces of selfishness and disobedience to Christ. Certainly it involves sacrifice and self-giving. It has always involved these. The early Christians left their homes and their loved ones and their friends, to go where they knew not, telling the story of salvation. I can hear them cry, "How long? how long? How far, how far must we go?" And the answer comes ringing, "As far as men have gone. To the last outpost of human habitation. Go! Go! Never stop going until all have heard." Where are you?

F. Concerning your covenants with God, where are you?

It has been my privilege as an evangelist to return to some churches to conduct revivals as many as eight times. Repeating meetings thus has brought revelations which puzzled me greatly. So many, it seems, who acquire a right standing with the Lord are unable to maintain their positions. Again and again they are constrained to seek God's saving grace, and to make new adjustments with Him. I wondered why. Now I believe I know! I believe it is because they have not kept their covenants with God. They broke their promises. That is no small thing, for God said in the Bible, "Neither were they steadfast in his covenant" (Ps. 78:37).

What about your covenant to tithe and to support the Lord's work with gifts and offerings? Are you up to date in these? What about your covenant to break completely and forever with sinful habits, sinful companions, sinful enterprises? "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

* * *

II. Where Are You In Your Relations To The Church?

The Church is God's own establishment for the propagation of the gospel and the salvation of lost men. With all of its shortcomings, its selfishness, its apparent failures, it is yet of great value. Where else on earth can one learn so much, in so short a time, for such little expense, as in the church?

Not only has God established the Church, but He also invites His children into it, and is not ashamed to call them brethren. It is as "terrible as an army with banners," and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

What about your church covenants? There are moral consequences resulting from church vows kept or broken. The church rules were made as holy men and women interpreted the Bible and Christian conduct. In your joining the church the world was led to believe that subscription to the rules was the Christian thing to do; but when they see those who profess Christianity violate the rules and trifle with their consciences, much damage is done and the unsaved are disappointed in Christian profession.

Lest some of the people in our own church have completely forgotten what those church rules are, let us call them to mind again:

"Avoiding evil of every kind, including:

"Taking the name of God in vain.

"Profaning of the Lord's day, either by unnecessary labor, or business, or by the patronizing or reading of secular papers, or by holiday diversions.

"Using of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or trafficking therein; giving influence to, or voting for, the licensing of places for the sale of the same; using of tobacco in any of its forms, or trafficking therein.

"Quarreling, returning evil for evil, gossiping, slandering, spreading surmises injurious to the good names of others.

"Dishonesty, taking advantage in buying and selling, bearing false witness, and like works of darkness. "The indulging of pride in dress or behavior." Participating in things not to the glory of God.

There is also a positive side to church covenants: doing that which is enjoined in the Word of God, including: "Being courteous to all men."

Contributing to the work of spreading the gospel according to ability which God has given.

Being helpful to all men as opportunity offers, especially to the household of faith.

"Loving God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength."

Attending faithfully the means of grace.

Pressing upon the attention of the unsaved the gospel invitation.

* * *

III. Where Are You In Your Relations To Your Fellow Men?

Is the Golden Rule still the royal law for you? Is it the rule you live by? "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This rule applied to every department of human living makes for the happiest life possible to man on earth. It is a workable rule of life. It is workable in every test of life. It works at home, in the way one treats those with whom he lives. It works in business, in how one treats his customers and employees. It works socially, in how one acts to those who do not enjoy the same social advantages.

What about the restitution of past wrong deeds? Is restitution necessary? "Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that soul shall be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof" (Num. 5: 6-7), or make restitution for his guilt in full (A.R.V.). Restitution cures many ills. It heals the wound in the restorer's heart, often heals broken friendships, and many times leads to conviction of sin and salvation of sinners.

Here is one man's testimony: "It was my first religious service, and under the influence of the gospel sermon that was preached, one word kept running through my brain: Restore, restore, restore. I tried to brush it aside, but it came again and again. It referred to an old matter of cheating a railroad company. I had long hated and forsaken the wrongdoing, but I had not confessed it nor restored. The struggle continued. Should I restore, when my friends would find out? What would they think? How could I know how much money was involved? Finally I decided to write anonymously to see how I could right my wrong. But as I went to write the letter there was a sense of dissatisfaction and incompleteness. And so I knew I must do the costly thing, which meant signing the letter with my own name, revealing who I was and what I had done. With that decision, followed by doing the restoring act, came a wonderful relief, but only momentary, for more light came, saying I must now share my experience with others, testify to it. I argued about that. How could I? But the insistent urge was there: Confess, confess, confess. I did. Then complete victory came to me, and not less than three others were convicted for their past wrongs, and were brought to repentance, and to Christ." There is healing in confession.

The question of God brought Adam into the light, out of his hiding place, out of his fear into God's grace. I trust this message will bring you out of your hiding place and to Christ.

* * * * *

02 -- WHITHER GOEST THOU?

John 16:5

As I sat before the fire one day an old man appeared before me in a vision. His hair was white, his shoulders were stooped, he leaned upon a staff and carried a scythe in one hand. Somewhat startled, I said, "Who are you?"

"My name is Time," he replied. "I watch the flowers as they blossom in the spring, and I see their falling petals as they are touched by the fingers of decay. I see the leaves come out green in the spring, and I see them turn red and gold and brown. I watch them as they fall to the ground and I gather them to their graves with the autumn winds. I bring children to happy families, I watch them mature and grow old and die, and 'the mourners go about the streets.' I watch the nations as they rise and flourish and decline and perish in endless night. I have witnessed man's trek from the first sea to the last ocean. I saw the Red Sea crossing and the water standing on either side like walls of marble. I saw the guiding fire and cloud, the manna falling from heaven and the cold water gushing from the solid rock. I saw Jericho's walls crumbling, vibrating to bits amid the shouts of God's people. I thrilled to the music of the stars as they joined

in the chorus with Deborah and Barak when the heavenlies fought for Israel. I watched Elijah confound the priests of Baal and the fire consume the sacrifice. I walked with the Magi when the star led them to Bethlehem and the manger cradle. I saw the capture and arrest in the Garden, the trial of mockery before Pilate, the procession to Golgotha, and the awful sight of the Crucifixion. I saw the world grow dark in the day, and tremble as with travail pain, the graves opening, and men quailing in fear." And then fixing his piercing eyes upon me he said, "And whither goest thou?"

The question of Old Father Time started a series of thoughts going through my mind.

* * *

I. Man Is A Traveler

For sixty centuries man has been going somewhere. He was thrust from home when he sinned, shut out of the Garden, destined to wander homeless, a traveler on earth with no resting place until his soul finds rest in God.

The speed with which men are traveling has increased until the average life today is little over thirty-five years. One businessmen's assurance company of southern California issued a publication which stated that even after one has reached the age of fifty years his chances are two to one that he will die from an accidental cause and not a natural one. Few live to die of old age. In western Texas I saw a man one hundred eleven years old; he attended services in the church where I preached. But when he died he did not die of old age alone; he took sick and died.

We are living in a fast age. Recently a man flew a rocket-jet plane from Washington state to Washington, D.C., in 3 hours and 46 minutes. A streamlined train crossing the Western prairies reached the astonishing speed of 123 miles an hour. An Englishman drove an automobile on the salt flats of Utah in 1946 at 405 miles an hour. Science tells us that light travels 186,000 miles a second. Unbelievable speed! But the fastest speed known, it would seem, is the passage of time. It goes so swiftly, sweeping everyone before it into eternity!

* * *

II. This World Is Not My Home

I see men living as if they expected to live here forever. Mammoth business concerns merging, placing the buying power of the nation in the hands of a few people. Men amassing huge fortunes, until 90 per cent of the nation's wealth is owned by 10 per cent of the people. Building, digging in, fortifying themselves, preparing for many years, when if the truth could be seen a few short months are all that are left.

A story which illustrates this truth comes from some unknown source. A prosperous man was stricken by disease one day in his office. He was placed in the hospital, where there appeared before him a vision of a stranger, a stranger seemingly from another world. The

stranger said, "I am Death, and I have come for you." "Oh," cried the ill man, "I am not prepared to die. I cannot die now! Give me one more chance. I promise to prepare for you, and to be ready the next time you call." Strange to say, Death took him at his word and gave him another chance. He improved and was soon back in his office and at his work. Like hundreds before him, with the return of good health came the old habit of rejecting Christ. He failed to keep his promise. A few weeks later he was again stricken by disease, and again was placed in the ambulance and taken to the hospital, where he was the second time approached by the stranger. "I am Death," said the stranger, "and I have come for you." "But," cried the patient, "I am not ready for you. I cannot die now. Give me one chance more. I promise to be ready next time you come." But it was too late. Death had come this time to take him. Certainly Death is coming someday for us all. For a season we can stay the grim hand, but for a season only. All too soon he will come to call for us and will not be denied.

* * *

III. The Next World Is Home Forever

God's Word says, "Man goeth to his long home." Eternity, the age of the ages! It is too long for the human mind to grasp. If the earth were encircled by an angel once each ten millenniums and each time the angel made the circuit he would, with the tip of his wing, sweep away one little grain of sand, by the time he had worn the earth into dust atoms, eternity would still have as long to exist as when it first began.

The eternal home is no grim thought to the saint of God. It is truly home to him. It marks the end of the long struggle, the daily overcoming of the flesh by prayer and perseverance. It marks the end of the stiff resistance he is forced to put up against the world with its blandishments, threats, and customs. It will mean he has passed the tribunal of his own awakened and purified conscience, and has received a verdict of acquittal there. Home, home at last! How many times he has staggered under the uprisings of Satan! HOW often he was tempted from without and perplexed! How many failures in holy effort had been registered! But now, home, saved forevermore! No, that is no unhappy thought.

The "long home" to the sinner, the Christ-rejecter, the disobedient, is quite another thing. He will have, at last, arrived at the place for which he prepared himself. "Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." What kind of place is that? It is a place of no pardon for the impenitent. It is a place determined by the actions of this life, actions voluntarily committed, and that have no promise of pardon in the next life. There is no ray of hope that falls athwart the dark path of the lost. No such possibility lights up the terrible gloom. Read what Jesus has to say about the barren branch, the tares, the servant who hid his lord's money. Against the foolish virgins "the door was shut." It is Jesus who employed His tender lips to picture the "gulf fixed" without bridge or cable between Gehenna and Paradise. There is not one passage recorded from His lips that authorizes me to preach probation after death. While it is true that the world is divided on this subject, and many theistic evolutionists of the present day are seeking to make the people regard future punishment as inconsistent with the goodness of God, the fact remains that Christian consciousness and the Holy Scriptures lead us to believe that we determine, in this world, what is to be our condition in the next. Who is it that declares, "Every idle word that men

shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"? It is Jesus, none other. It is the record of the Bible; and wherever the Bible utters its voice, its testimony is conclusive.

* * *

IV. What Depends On Where You Are Going

There are important issues hanging upon the direction you are going.

1. Having peace in this life depends on which way you are going. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." His life is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Whatever else a sinner has, of wealth, or health, or friends, or position, or power, he does not have peace. How do I know? Because God told me.

Peace is what all men want and few find. They fail to find it because they seek it in places where it doesn't exist. Only Christ gives peace. "My peace I give unto you. My peace I leave with you," is His offer.

2. Your attitude towards death depends on which way you are going. Death is one of the inescapable events of life. It is at this moment marking its victims. Those who read these words are within a hand's breadth of the grave. It is only the redeemed who can say with the Apostle Paul, "O death, where is thy sting?"

3. Finally, your position at the judgment depends upon which way you travel now. Scriptures say that one day God will draw a line through the world that will separate all men. There will be mothers on one side and fathers on the other, husbands on one side and wives on the other, children on one side and parents on the other, brothers on one side and sisters on the other. Whichever side of that line you find yourself upon depends upon which way you go through this life.

Never be mistaken about the judgment. All men are to be there. None is exempt. To make a high mark in some tests is to be exempt, but not so at the judgment. Every man's works will be tried.

Today there is redemption. Today there is mercy. Today there is salvation. "Whither goest thou?" Which way will you take? Will you take the Christian way and be saved?

On August 25, 1951, the U.S.S. "Benevolence," a United States Navy hospital ship, was steaming through the fog, about two miles off the Golden Gate. She collided with an outbound freighter, the "Mary Luckenbach." It was her trial run and there were aboard two full crews -- one navy, the other civilian -- 526 people in all. It took one half hour for her to sink. It was a tragedy of the worst sort. That same day an Italian fisherman, John Napoli, headed homeward from the fishing grounds with about a quarter of a ton of salmon on board. Suddenly he heard through the fog the voice of a Coast Guardsman, "We need help." He answered the call and, working like mad for hours, working against time, for it was slack tide and soon the tide would

turn and wash all out to sea, John Napoli rescued 74 men and women from death. The terrible strain broke the little man physically and he can no longer work. He awakes in the night startled, nearly jumps out of bed, thinking he hears the woeful sob of 500 people calling for help. But he said, "I feel so happy about things," knowing that he rescued 74 human beings from death. All but 23 were saved among that number of 526 souls. How I wish it could be that way for you who read this message! Not all but 23, but all, all, all! There is salvation for all at the foot of the Cross. Which way will you go? God grant that you will flee to Him and come into the harbor of God's mercy.

* * * * *

03 -- HAVE YOU COUNTED THE COST?

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish (Luke 14:28-30).

We have learned much, and are learning more, about the high cost of many things: the high cost of living, the high cost of education, the high cost of war, the high cost of loyalties. There are experts who are well able to teach us costs for every department of human existence, but few are making any attempt to help us compute the cost of living and dying without Jesus, the cost of not being a Christian.

To think is the distinguishing faculty of man. It is evident, however, that few men like to think; for thinking is work spelled with capital letters, and not many like to work. To think seriously about sin is to act as David did when he thought about his wicked ways. He said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." This is the only possible goal to reach if we think upon our sins at all. They will drive us to God.

* * *

I. The High Cost Of Not Being A Christian In The Light Of Influence Upon Your Fellow Men

What a harvest influence will one day reap at the judgment! Once a sin is committed it never stops -- not even at the grave nor at the judgment. One man caught a glimpse of the power and continuation of influence, and gave us a little verse:

A careful man I've got to be,
For a little fellow follows me
I do not dare to go astray
For fear he'll go this self-same way.

I must not madly step aside,
Where pleasure's paths are smooth and wide,
And join in wine's red revelry,

For a little fellow follows me.

I cannot once escape his eyes;
Whate'er he sees me do, he tries.
Like me he says he's going to be,
This little chap who follows me.

He thinks that I am good and fine,
Believes in every word of mine.
The base in me he must not see,
This little chap who follows me.

I must remember as I go,
Through summer's sun and winter's snow,
I'm building for the years to be,
For a little fellow follows me.

(Author unknown)

It may be that the parent who sins will find forgiveness from God, but the sin committed sows the seed of evil in the child's heart, and its influence never stops. For that reason God's mercy must endure "for ever." Only by eternal endurance can forgiveness outlive sin's influence. Every lost soul is an infinite loss. It is a loss that can never be regained, a mistake that can never be rectified. Oh, the harvest which influence will reap at the judgment!

The story is told of Evangelist Rayburn, a noted union evangelist of a generation past, who was preaching in a tent revival in the Midwest. A businessman of the city asked Mr. Rayburn to do his best to encompass the salvation of a wayward son. Of course the evangelist promised to do his best. Later in the campaign Mr. Rayburn went to the young man and invited him to the place of prayer. The boy pointed to his father across the tent and said, "There is my father. You ask him to go, and if he goes I will go." Mr. Rayburn went to the boy's father, the same man who had requested help for the boy, and repeated the son's message. That man fell into his chair, buried his face in his hands, and sobbed, "Anything but that, do not ask me to do that. I can never do it." Neither of them found peace with God during the revival. The power of influence kept the boy away from the Saviour.

Then again, many a person has been driven deeper into sin, and his sinfulness has been aggravated by the un-Christian practice of professors of religion.

The influence of schoolteachers is tremendous force. Often these teachers wield an even greater influence upon youth than do the parents in the home. How many times have children returned from school steeped in erroneous belief, and said, "This is true, for the professor said so"! They have accepted the doctrines of atheistic evolutionists, although to do so meant to turn about-face from the teachings of their parents. What responsibility rests upon the schoolteacher!

It took just one generation for Germany under the influence of Nazi teachers to become a barbarous nation that threw the entire world into catastrophe.

The influence of Sunday-school teachers. If the Sunday-school teacher who hears me preach tonight will catch a vision of the power of influence, never again will he go before a class to apologize for an unprepared lesson.

In a Western city many years ago, a Sunday-school teacher was walking home from work. She was weary and worn, her feet seemed on fire, and home meant much-needed rest. As she walked along she came upon two little girls playing hopscotch in the street. Her tired body said, "Hurry on home. You need rest so much." Her Christian heart said, "Talk to those girls about attending Sunday school." She obeyed her heart, and those two little girls became attendants at the Sunday school. They grew into women, married Christian men, and today take their places among Christian people living for God. What if that tired Sunday-school teacher had failed them that evening? The power of influence!

The influence of American citizens. What reaping we are doing today of the deeds we sowed yesterday! We did, for profit, one of the most cowardly and despicable deeds in our history a few years ago. We pulled the bung out of the beer barrel and poured a flood of intoxicants out upon the heads of our youth. I do not make an appeal today for a new political party. I am making an appeal for American people to stand up and demand that existing parties place in their platforms a law to abolish from our land this satanic power, drink, that is ruining our land today. Only the insane can gaze upon the staggering, diseased, debauched womanhood and manhood of our land and say it is good thus. Maybe there is somewhere a better way than prohibition, but if there is we have not yet found it. We have five million stupid alcoholics in our land today, who have a future life expectancy of from three to five years. It is fearful to think of, but it must be true that, at the judgment,

The drunkard was there, and the gambler,
And the man that sold them the drink.
And the people who gave them the license
Together in darkness did sink.

How could justice do otherwise than demand payment in full of people who, for profit alone, would debauch a nation?

Oh, what a weeping and wailing,
As the lost were told of their fate!
They cried for the rocks and the mountains,
They prayed but their prayers were too late.

* * *

II. The Cost Of Not Being A Christian In The Light Of The Law Of Moral Retribution

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This scripture is true. It would be true if there were no Bible. Men who have never heard of Christianity know it to be true. Every thinking person knows it to be true.

Think for a moment! Every person is sowing every moment of his waking hours. Every person is becoming like that which he sows. "You are not what you think you are; but what you think, you are." It is impossible to sow one thing and be something else. What a man sows comes from the heart, and God tells us in His Word, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Everyone must reap. This is the law of the harvest, and it is the law of God. Everyone must reap what he sows. If you sow wild oats you must reap a wild harvest. But the other side of the picture is equally true. If you sow righteousness you will reap righteousness. Everyone must reap more than he sows. Christ tells us the least we can expect is a thirty-fold increase on our sowing. And the possibility ranges from thirty-fold to a hundred-fold.

Everyone must reap forever. If I could take you up, up, up, over the treetops and beyond the clouds, to where the city of God is, where twelve gates stand open all day and where night never comes; if I could there show you a beautiful woman shining like the sun, and you could talk with her and ask her who she is, you would be thrilled with her reply. "I am Mary the Magdalene. I was shot through the heart and was down for the count. But I met a Man who, with one move, lifted me and saved me." Then if you were to ask her, "How long can you shine thus?" she would answer, "Just as long as God lives." And then if I could take you down, down, down beneath the mudsills of the world, and let you see a youth wringing his hands in the regions of the lost, and you were to ask him who he is, he would answer, "I am the rich young ruler." "How long must you be thus lost?" "Just as long as God lives," he would reply.

* * *

III. The High Cost Of Not Being In The Light Of Death

"It is appointed unto men once to die." This is a consequence of sin. You may be freed from sin's penalties, but you may never be freed from sin's consequences in this life. Only the Christian can say when facing death, "O death, where is thy sting?" A young lady, a Christian, when dying, said to my good friend Mason Lee: "I am ready to go to Jesus. And if it is possible, when I get there, to pray, I will intercede for you at the Saviour's throne." How different that is from the final cries of the war criminal Mussolini, who begged for mercy when being shot by his compatriots!

* * *

IV. The High Cost Of Not Being In The Light Of Eternal Existence

Where are the dead? Can we know the answer to that question? Yes! We may know, for God's Word tells us where they are. As to their influence they are still alive. Speaking of righteous Abel, God's Word states, "He being dead yet speaketh." How? By faith's influence! He has been dead twenty-five hundred years but through his influence for right he still speaks.

Many an old saint of God who has been in heaven fifty years still lives right here in your city. How? Through his influence. Many a staggering, lecherous old wretch who has been in hell fifty years still staggers drunkenly on the streets of this city. How? In those whom he influenced to live in sin while he lived.

As to their bodies, they are in the grave. There they await the trumpet call which will awaken them and bring them back from the dust to face the Judge and the judgment.

As to their souls, they are in heaven or hell -- not at the final judgment, but ten seconds after they breathe their last breath.

Oh, I pray God you may be given repentance and faith, and that you will count the cost, and pay the price to be saved today.

* * * * *

04 -- HAVE YOU RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST?

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve (Acts 19:1-7).

The Ephesian church had been converted out of paganism under the preaching of the silver-tongued Apollos. He was the product of the great educational center Alexandria, was an eloquent speaker, and knew well the Scriptures. He was grounded in Christian principle, for it is said of him, he "was instructed in the way of the Lord," and he was a zealous soul winner, but he knew only the "baptism of John," which baptism was the "baptism of water unto repentance." But when Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos preach they saw at once that he had a great lack in his ministry, and that lack was the abiding, sanctifying, cleansing, empowering presence of the Holy Ghost. They took him home with them and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," and he was sanctified. He then went on to Achaia, where he preached in accordance with this new experience of holiness, and "helped them much which had believed through grace."

After this Ephesian revival Paul came to Ephesus, found the new converts rejoicing in their victory, but desperately needing the baptism with the Holy Ghost. He preached to them and enlightened them, prayed for them and saw them receive the Spirit. This receiving of the Holy Spirit is, without doubt, the outstanding need of the Church today.

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God at Pentecost was certainly Christ's crowning gift to His people. Everything prior to that occasion pointed to it, and everything following dated from it. It is the source, the center from which all church activity and church extension have proceeded. It is also the pivot-point of the believer's life and work. Jesus admonished His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. He knew the world had to have the message, and He knew that His followers were the ones to take the message, but He forbade them doing so until they had been properly equipped for it by the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the question of the text is worthy of consideration by all Christian people today. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"

Without a doubt Pentecost was the greatest day the Church ever knew up until that time. It was the fruit of all the dispensations which preceded it, and it was the beginning of the time of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost on earth. It was the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven in human hearts. Until this time the message preached was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; but then the Kingdom came, was set up and established within, and those who received this Kingdom were "partakers of the divine nature."

As Pentecost was the greatest day the Church ever knew until that time, so also is the personal Pentecost the greatest day a Christian ever sees up to that time. It is from that hour that he can recognize growth in spiritual things, and understanding of spiritual values, as never before.

Today, however, we are not living in the early days of the Church. Little difference to us what this baptism did for believers of that long gone day, unless we may also have the same blessed baptism. But if today is the day of this ministry, then it is important to know what the baptism with the Holy Ghost did for them, for the same may be done in and for us.

All we need to do is read the record to see what was done for the early followers of Christ at Pentecost. They needed something more than they had in their converted state. They were jealous, greedy, envious, selfish, and irritable. They were grasping place seekers. They were victims of dispositional sin, and half blind to spiritual truth. But when the baptism with the Holy Ghost was given to them, God's Word was revealed to them in a new way. Until then God's Word had been only flashes of brilliance for their guidance, but the baptism with the Holy Ghost made the light blaze constant and illuminating.

The baptism with the Spirit gave them power with God and with men. Under its power and influence a little band of timid men and women became a conquering army. They marched, not with physical force, but with tender hearts, humble spirits, deep concern for the lost about them. A power to see anew was theirs. Their vision now took in the unseen. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The baptism with the Spirit scattered them abroad. They left homes, friends, loved ones, and were driven by the Spirit to the uttermost parts of the earth, wherever lost men had gone. And where they went revivals occurred, redemption came, and new churches sprang up. They had power. It was promised power.

It gave them a new revelation of Jesus. It is the office of the Spirit to reveal Christ. Peter preaching his first Pentecostal sermon declared that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The baptism with the Spirit revealed Jesus as Lord, indicating supremacy; as Christ, the Anointed One. No other one can compare with Him. God recognized and ratified the lordship of Christ, and by the baptism with the Spirit revealed it to men. True, it had appeared before in glimpses. Hannah sang of Christ when God answered her prayer and gave her a son, Samuel. She sang that He was the King to come. Isaiah carried out the theme by saying that the King to come, the Christ, was to loose captives, heal broken hearts, open prison doors, and preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And Isaiah reached his climax when he said: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

And then on the Day of Pentecost the new revelation was that this much-sung-of One was Lord and Christ. Listen to Peter preach after his eyes were opened, and Jesus was revealed to him by the Spirit's baptism: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God... delivered [to death] by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death [resurrected]... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." This revelation was also made to Paul, for he says, "When it pleased God, who... called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." Jesus promised that revelation to be the ministry of the Comforter, whom He would send. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." This is true in the experience of men. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ in a new and meaningful way.

The baptism with the Spirit purified their hearts. Peter clearly declared this at Jerusalem when he was "called on the carpet" for preaching to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. "Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying... And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them [Gentiles], as on us at the beginning... purifying their hearts by faith." This was also true in the case of the apostles. Before, they had worldly ambitions; fear and selfishness were their bane. Afterwards, these traits had all disappeared and, in their places, ardent zeal, holy love, and a holy life appeared. This is also the experience of believers all about us when they walk in the light. They find "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Do we have reason to believe that God will give to us that same Holy Spirit baptism today? "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

* * *

The Holy Spirit Is Every Christian's Inheritance

Inheritance is different from wages, rewards, gifts, or even legacy. Distant relatives, friends, and servants may be remembered in a will. But the inheritance comes only to children, and it comes to them even in the absence of a will. It is a right that issues from relationship. It is part of the promised inheritance, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance

among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18). Again, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20: 32). Again, "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [guarantee] of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Sanctification, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, is the first distribution of our Heavenly Father's estate among His children. It all hinges upon relationship. "If children, then heirs." So if any lack proof of their adoption, let them first seek forgiveness of their sins. But all who possess the witness of sonship may confidently press their claims to the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. For, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." You may, with boldness, claim your family rights.

* * *

The Baptism With The Holy Spirit Is Every Christian's Greatest Need

There is no substitute for Him. Education, refinement, environment, native ability, personality, none of these nor all of them can take the place of the Holy Spirit. We need Him for personal victory and clean living before God. We need Him for power to serve others and to win them from darkness to light. We need Him for guidance in the hour of perplexity. We need Him for comfort in the hour of sorrow.

* * *

Every Believer Is Commanded To Be Filled With The Holy Ghost

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Again, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:16). It is not enough to live right. It is not enough to do right. You, a believer, must be filled with the Holy Spirit or you are a long way from being where God wants you to be. God purchased the baptism with the Holy Spirit for us at fearful cost. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

The final and important question is, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"

* * * * *

05 -- IF GOD BE FOR US WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

Romans 8:23

These are the words of the great apostle to the Gentiles. He was on his third missionary journey, and wrote this letter during a brief stay of three months at Corinth. The eighth chapter of the Book of Romans is one of the highest levels of revelation in the entire book. It begins with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation." My text is the very highest point in the chapter. It is important that we consider the context with the text.

* * *

I. The Verities Of The Context

"We know," is one of the characteristic declarations of the Apostle Paul. Again and again he repeats these words of truth and assurance. "I know whom I have believed"; "I know He is able"; "I know, I know, I know!" We do not need the context to find enough of these verities to send us along our way rejoicing. This is a remarkable thing in the face of the fact that we live in a confusing world; in a day of contrast -- ignorance and knowledge, fear and confidence, doubt and assurance.

In the first century there were Gnostics who claimed to know everything, and agnostics who claimed to know nothing for sure. Paul was a Christian Gnostic -- one who through every experience of life was able to say, "I know."

There are some things we cannot know, and we are the better off not knowing: where God came from, the hour we must die, and the time of the second coming of Jesus. But there are some things we may know. What are some of them?

A. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (verse 28). This verse lifts God's people above disappointment, puts them beyond reach of evil, and establishes them under His protection in this world of war and storm. It makes love -- love to God and the love of God -- the solution of every problem. It makes love our love of God and His love of us -- the very first element in forgiveness and the most important element in sanctification. It eliminates every antagonistic and malevolent emotion from our hearts. It places all who are God's children under the wings of God and keeps them secure. It places God between the Christian and every peril. It makes everything work in a pattern of good, and turns catastrophe into steppingstones to heaven. It brings man to the place where neither men nor devils can inflict spiritual detriment upon him, because he is in the will of God. No wonder Martin Luther, that stocky little monk from Wittenberg, cried, "I am immortal as long as I stay in the will of God. Nothing can kill me until He gets through with me, and when He is through with me, I want then to go quickly to heaven."

B. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities" (verse 26). We mortals are so encumbered with infirmities, of thought, of speech, of action, of communication! It is an important thing to have divine aid in all these. The Holy Spirit does help us; and He not only searches the heart, but He knows the mind of God. He knows how to take our halting words, arrange them coherently, and present them to God in understandable prayer. No wonder the poet, who caught sight of this truth, said, "And Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." Even the most unlearned and ignorant can shake heaven and earth and hell by his praying. We know we have help!

C. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (verse 16). What consoling knowledge this, the witness of the Spirit that we are His! What does that mean? It means that the converted man has the witness of the Spirit that he is regenerate, but

it is an intermittent witness, as John Wesley said, "anon obscured by intervening clouds and, in time of temptation, frequently entirely absent." Then we cry:

"Oh, drive these dark clouds from my sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me to Thee up on high,
Where fog and clouds are no more."

(Author unknown)

But when we are sanctified, we have the constant, abiding witness of the Spirit. Then we shout:

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine;
Here shines undimmed one blissful day,
For all my night has passed away."

John Bunyan describes the sanctified life in Beulah Land as a place where both the sun and the moon shine day and night. God's radiant light has driven away the fogs and the clouds of carnality, and the life has become fruitful and glorious with holiness.

* * *

II. The Contrasts Of The Text

There are three that are worth our notice.

A. For and Against. A conflict. There is a great fight raging. The contestants are God and Satan. The prize of war is the immortal souls of men. The battlefield is every sphere of human activity and life. The weapons are deadly and formidable. It is impossible to escape this fight in life alone. Again and again in Scripture we are warned of this dualism, and admonished to surrender in consecration to God, so as to be on His side. The good news about the contest is that God is omnipotent, and he who surrenders to God is on the side of right and is assured of ultimate victory. There is something invincible introduced into life when it is consecrated to God. How can you stop that sort of man? You cannot fire him, for you didn't hire him. You cannot starve him but once, and that isn't worth while. You cannot isolate him, for he is like fire and he will burn his way out. You can put him into prison, stone him, kill him, tempt him, impoverish him, afflict him, and torment him, but he will come through more than conqueror.

B. "God... Who?" If God is for me, who can be against me? Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." With all that might behind us, before us, around us, who can be against us to hurt us? The weapons may be many and mighty but the victory is already determined. God shall bruise the serpent's head.

Satan is against us but he is a defeated foe. His doom is fixed. Only for a little time will he go forth in the earth, "seeking whom he may devour." But his end is already dated.

The world is against us but the world, too, is doomed. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). No marvel that the world hates us; it hated Christ before it hated us. The world hates us because we are His friends. But He has judged the world, and it is doomed. How can the world avail against us? How can it harm us? God is for us! The worst the world can do is take away physical life. But God said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

C. Present Suffering and Future Glory. This is the contrast that Moses comprehended when he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He took the long look and made his choice. The future glory to him was the valley of God for the valley of the Nile; the River of Life for the river Nile; the City Foursquare with its jasper walls, streets of gold, twelve fountains, and singing redeemed ones, instead of the cities of the plains of Egypt.

The future glory is the prospect of being like Him. "Beloved... it cloth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." What present suffering would we not endure to make sure a future glory like that! Then there shall be permanent deliverance from sin's influence, for we "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (verse 21). The bondage of corruption is ours today by reason of man's first fall into sin. But the promise is: "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15: 53).

Future glory holds for us the redemption of the body (verse 23). For this "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." What a wonderful day!

* * *

III. The Encouragements Of The Text

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" The entire Bible record is the record of how God is for us. He was for us when He first promised a Saviour. He was for us when He led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery; when He gave guidance in the wilderness; when He sent us judges, prophets, evangelists, and workers to call backslidden man back to himself; in the council chambers of eternity when He "delivered [Jesus] by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23) to be crucified for our sins; on the Day of Pentecost when He sent the Holy Spirit. He will be always for us because He is always with us. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

If God is for us, then His people are for us. We are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," shouting us on. Some of them are upstairs and some downstairs -- "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15). They are all for us. Jesus said to them that followed Him that all the saints were their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters.

God's people's being for us assures us fellowship. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." There is a communion here that is rich. God's children, persecuted and misunderstood, shunned and ridiculed, join hands together and sing:

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

* * * * *

06 -- HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE?

How shall we escape, if...? (Heb. 2:3.)

This letter to Hebrew Christians is purposed to bring man into God's presence, make him holy so he can remain there, and, lest he fail at the same points as ancient Israel, there are some appropriate warnings given. The warnings and admonitions are given to the world through Christ, and therefore should be heeded by all. Jesus is the Maker of all things, for "he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:2). He is the Upholder of all things, for He upholds "all things by the word of his power" (1: 3). He is the End of all things, for He is "appointed heir of all things" (1:2). He is the Image of God, for He "is the express image of his person." He is the Glory of God, for He is "the brightness of his [the Father's] glory." He is the world's Saviour, for He "by himself purged our sins" (1:3). He is the Embodiment of authority, for He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed" to the things which He has said. He it is who asks us in the words of the text, "How shall we escape?"

* * *

I. "How Shall We Escape, If We Neglect So Great Salvation?"

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:1-4.)

There is a note of warning in that question which applies to both sinner and Christian.

The word spoken by angels proved authentic. Over and over again throughout the Scriptures is this true. Every sin and every disobedience received its just reward; every defiance of God's moral law received appropriate retribution, especially the sin of neglect.

The word neglect has various implications in the text. First, it implies inattention. God's words and warnings, promises and prophecies were not considered important enough to hold the attention. Inattention is today one of Satan's choice weapons for ruining the souls of men. Other things -- making a living, accumulating a fortune, obtaining political power, pleasure, fame -- all hold higher places in the minds of men than do God's will and Word. They are a part of satanic conspiracy to distract man's thinking from the all-important. Second, it implies postponement of the most important decision. It is salvation that is delayed here. The postponement places in jeopardy, not only your own soul, but also the souls of those whom you might win by your Christian influence. It robs God of the power of that influence in His kingdom. Third, it implies refusal to obey God. To neglect Him is to refuse Him now, to put Him off until a more suitable time.

* * *

II. How Shall We Escape If We Harden Our Hearts Against God?

"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; while it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7-15).

There are several ways set forth in this passage by which men may harden their hearts. Tempting God is one -- living presumptuously; seeing how far in sin you can go and yet have assurance that He will accept you when you return. Deserting the cause is another, "departing from the living God." This is the sin of Demas, who forsook Paul and the good way, and returned to Thessalonica because he loved the present world. Becoming blinded and deafened by the delusive glamour of sin is another way to harden the heart, "the deceitfulness of sin." It makes promises, but does not keep them; sin blossoms, but its fruit is death. Condoning the sin of carnality hardens the heart. "Lest there be in any of you an evil heart..." The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not under the sway of His law, and it cannot be. It is the outlaw in the universe. Adam and Eve, through disobedience, became outlaws from Eden, but carnality is the outlaw of the entire kingdom of God. It is public enemy No. 1 in the realm of God.

* * *

III. How Shall We Escape If We Fail To Believe?

"And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 3:18-19 and 4:11). This is the unbelief that shuts the child of God out from the sanctifying experience, as well as from all other blessings which He offers to bestow. Of whom did He speak here? Of them who heard the Word of God, who were one time rescued by divine intervention from their Egyptian slavery, and who displeased the longsuffering God for forty years, and were finally shut out of His holy rest because of unbelief. Now that same promise of rest is given to men today. The divine warning is to shun the example of Israel, who failed to attain to it. It is not enough to hear the Word of God; you must act upon it. They heard but did not believe nor act.

* * *

IV. How Shall We Escape If We Are Indifferent To God?

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14).

Indifference robs you of the best God has for you. For the writer to the Hebrews said, in substance at least: There is a great deal that we should like to say about this high priesthood, this holy walk, but you make it difficult to explain because you will not pay attention to the spiritual truth. You are slow, "dull of hearing," when it comes to spiritual values. You could be sanctified, you could be "more than conquerors," you could be radiantly and magnetically victorious if you would heed the Word of God.

Indifference robs others of the riches you should be imparting to them. Like Aquila and Priscilla, laymen of Paul's day, you should be teaching others, but indifference has spoiled you. You need to be taught over again the ABC's for yourself. You are continually living on milk, like immature children.

Indifference weakens your power of discrimination. You can no longer "discern both good and evil." You have become too well acquainted with sin, so accustomed to sinners, so neglectful of your own spiritual life that "strong delusion" is near to you, and about to overtake you. If it catches you, then you can believe a lie, and be damned, having no power to discriminate between what is good and what is evil.

* * *

V. How Shall We Escape If We Are Slothful?

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of

God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:4-12).

Slothfulness is the chief cause of backsliding. They were spiritually lazy and fell away. Once you have fallen away, it is no easy thing to return to victory. In fact, you do not need to expect to be made to repent as you did the first time, for you have put Christ to open shame. It may be that you must deliberately obey Him without much feeling of joy, until you have proved yourself determined to go through with God. The warning is, Do not grow slack.

* * *

VI. How Shall We Escape If We Deliberately Apostatize?

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 26-31). No wonder God urges you to repent "To day," for it is a "fearful thing" to fall into God's hands. There is no time to wait, and deliberate sin brings fiery indignation upon the head of him who thus sins.

* * *

VII. How Shall We Escape If We Reject Holiness?

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying,

Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:14-17, 25-29).

Peace with men and holiness before God these are inseparable. You cannot fail in one except you fail in the other. These two are important and God tells us why. He said, "Follow peace..., holiness," lest you "fail of the grace of God." There is danger of failing in His grace, and losing Him out of your heart and life. Then we are to follow peace and holiness for the sake of our influence. Strengthen the feeble hands and the weak knees. Live so that the weak will not miss the way because you have lived. Third, watch lest a root of bitterness (carnality) springing up ruin you and defile the brotherhood. I know a young man who became an apostate after he was sanctified. He not only took himself out of the hands and will of God, but influenced his wife, his brothers and sisters, and, I fear, his old mother to leave God and go back into guilt and condemnation. The carnal root of bitterness defiles everyone who comes under its influence.

The picture of rejecting holiness is a dark and a sad one. See it in the life of King Saul. Once redeemed, changed, receiving a new heart, prophesying, walking with God; then falling into disobedience and sin, and dying by his own hand after crying, "I have played the fool." See it in the life of Orpah, daughter-in-law of Naomi and Elimelech. The curtain drops on her life as she rejects holiness and turns back into Moab, turns back to the dark and dreadful death of the holiness rejecter.

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07 -- WILL YOU SURRENDER?

Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? (I Chron. 29:5.)

Moses said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord (Exod. 32: 29).

The story that leads up to and surrounds the Exodus command of Moses is the story of the giving of the law to Israel, and their consequent backsliding. Their excuses for their sins were few and groundless, for God has left every sinner "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Moses called them back to God and demanded a genuine consecration of their all to God. The question of the text is, "Who will consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"

* * *

I. What Is Involved In Consecration?

It means "all for Jesus."

But consecration is involved in every vocation of life. The lawyer who announces to the public that he is qualified to help them in solving their problems in human relations must have

some consecration to his task. The doctor must be consecrated. His choice of vocation requires some consecration. He holds himself ready to answer the sick call at any hour of the day or night. He must be willing to go in any kind of weather and in any kind of road conditions. He must be willing to expose himself to any kind of disease, no matter how infectious, contagious, or fatal it may be. If he is not willing to live thus he is not worthy to be called a doctor. The teaching profession involves consecration.

Consecration is not confined to the field of commerce and the professions. It is also involved in successful domestic living. It is enjoined upon every member of the household -- mother, father, boy, and girl. The parent must be consecrated to his task, and his consecration goes the limit in sacrifice, self-denial, and self-giving. This type of consecration is a step higher than the consecration for material things. Jesus used it as a type of religious consecration, and said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." The domestic consecration insists that everyone else be excluded from the affections, until death parts.

Religious consecration is a step higher than domestic consecration. It includes the affections, the affinities, the desires, the practices, the intentions, the all of life. "All for Jesus!" Nothing withheld. Complete, absolute, unconditional surrender to God! It means to be what God wants you to be, regardless of what others do. It means to do what God wants you to do, even when others cease. It means to suffer everything God wants you to suffer. We have all prayed to escape suffering. But Paul, the Apostle, one time prayed, "That I may know... the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10). My pastor stood one day by the bedside of his dying companion; his heart was breaking. She looked up to him and said: "I don't want to die. You need me and our babies need me. I want so much to stay with you. I don't understand this. I have asked God where, and when, and how, but I have not asked Him why. I'm leaving the 'why's' all in His hands." That is consecration! Many there are who would die for Jesus. What He really asks today is for men and women who will live for Him. It sometimes involves and requires more determined consecration to live for Him than it does to die for Him.

* * *

II. Who May Consecrate Thus To God?

Only the Christian. Paul pleaded, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). He was not speaking to his brethren of blood relation. When he opened his Roman letter he said, "Beloved of God, called to be saints... I beseech you... brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." They were more than brothers of land or race. When he spoke to his brothers of the land he called them, "My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." But here he is talking to his brethren in the Lord. He urged them to present themselves "holy." They had to be born-again men to obey this requirement, for the new birth is the beginning of the holy life. Sanctification is holiness completed, but conversion begins it.

Paul urged them to a living sacrifice. Unsaved men are "dead in trespasses and sins," and must be born again to have divine life. Only then can they give themselves to God a "living sacrifice."

This consecration includes every animal propensity. The whole body, the house we live in. Once the body was yielded for "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," but now "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:13). And "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).

Consecration takes in all of the mental faculties. Even the thought life is to be brought into captivity and obedience to Christ. True, you cannot control all thoughts of evil, but you can control evil thinking. You are not what you think you are; but what you think, you are. Thoughts of evil become evil thinking at the point where conscience says, "Stop here!" and you do not obey. The thought life involves searching God's Word, reading the Bible, for in it "ye think ye have eternal life."

Consecration involves your influence. Everyone has an influence for good or evil. It is silent, subtle, hidden, doing its work surely and inevitably. When the results are visible they are often unchangeable. For influence works like leaven in the dough -- unseen until the leavening work is done, and it is too late to change.

Consecration includes all your soul, heart, life, and love. Obedience to the letter is not enough. You must have and maintain the right spirit in your obedience. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart... soul... might" (Deut. 6:5).

Consecration involves your property. Here is often the acid test of consecration. It was in the case of the unjust steward of St. Luke's Gospel (Luke 16:1-13). The man was put in charge of his lord's property and money, but proved himself deceitful and unworthy, defaulted in his trust, abused his stewardship, and was caught at it. He was removed from his position and was disapproved by his lord. Paul made every effort to keep clear of that sentence, and said, "I keep under my body... lest... when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." This was the sentence of Judas -- chosen by the Lord to be the treasurer of the first fellowship of saints, placed in high position by the Master, and then stripped of his position and castigated for his greed. This failure in consecrating property to God was also the downfall of the rich young ruler. He kept the commandments from his youth up, and was commended by Jesus for doing so. But when he was required by the Lord to "sell" and "give," he went away sorrowful, loving wealth and luxury more than he did Jesus.

I was told a story of a man in a Northwestern city who made a business transaction which netted him twelve thousand dollars' profit. He was sharing the news of his good fortune with a friend when the friend said: "You are a brilliant man to make that kind of deal, making twelve thousand dollars' profit. But I'd like to know something. Have you paid tithe on that twelve thousand profit?" The answer was: "I've been thinking some about this matter of tithing and I've come to some conclusions about it. I think that the tithing system is a good thing for men of low income." Right there he revealed his true character. There is revealed the reason that a rich man can hardly enter into the kingdom of God-not simply because he is rich, nor because God has enmity for a rich man; in fact, some of God's best friends were rich men: Job, Abraham, Joseph

of Arimathaea. God knows men, with keen insight of human nature. He knows that men are prone to trust riches, and that once they are rich they rebel against the tithe law of the Scriptures.

* * *

III. Why Must We Consecrate Thus?

"Come now, and let us reason together." The reasons are many. Paul said it is a "reasonable service." It would seem sufficient to an honest Christian that God should authorize it, and yet many require reasons. Well, there are many, and here are a number of them. First, we should consecrate thus to God because He made us, and "not we ourselves." We are His by right of creation. Second, we should consecrate thus to God because He redeemed us, not with silver or gold, but with His own precious blood. We lost ourselves in sin. We got ourselves mortgaged to evil. Then Christ redeemed us, bought us back, and we are His by right of redemption. Third, He adopted us. We had ruined our name, and it would no longer commend us. Our sins had soiled our souls. But Jesus redeemed us, adopted us, gave us His name, and trusted us. We are His by right of adoption. Fourth, we should consecrate to Him because it is impossible to serve two masters (Matt. 12:30). "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." "No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Jesus tolerates only one will, His. Fifth, we should consecrate because to do so gives us power with God and with men. We are not here to enjoy and to be pleased, but to win the world to Christ.

* * *

IV. What Is The Purpose Of Consecration?

It has a twofold purpose. First, death. It is the death road to life. Paul said, "I die daily." No man will do that for a cause to which he is not consecrated. Second, devotion. God asks for and expects our highest devotion, and devotion demands consecration.

* * *

V. When Shall We Consecrate Thus?

Today! There is no time to trifle. Tomorrow is one day too late. Opportunity is priceless and dare not be squandered. "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Conviction should listen to no delay. Light is given to walk in and, if it is trifled with, goes out; and in the ensuing darkness no man can work. Delay is risk with no compensation. Today you can, tomorrow you cannot. The commercial motto is, "If it will pay, do it today!" Let us then be as wise as they. Let us obey God's "to day" and be able to say with Wesley:

"Take my soul and body's powers;
Take my memory and my will;
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel,

All I think or speak or do.
Take my heart, but make it new."

* * *

VI. What Is The Result Of Consecration?

As there is a twofold purpose, so there is a twofold result. First, there is safety. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God..." Get under these mercies, get under these Blood drops. The safest place in the world is in the will of God. Martin Luther, that stocky little monk from Wittenberg, said: "I am immortal as long as I stay in the will of God, until God gets through with me. Then when He is through with me, the quicker I can get to heaven the better." I read that and said, "Luther, that security was yours once, four hundred years ago, but it is mine today." Nothing can kill me if I stay in God's will, until He gets through with me; and when He is through with me, heaven will be high gain." Maybe I shall die today; but if I do I purpose, by the grace of God, it shall be because God sees I have done all I can for Him, won all the souls I can, and just wants to take me on home to heaven.

The second result is sanctification. The Holy Spirit cannot be barred out of a consecrated heart. That is His home; He lives there, and He cannot be locked out of His own home. Man's entire responsibility in his sanctification is this giving up. The moment he has surrendered completely, and believes God, that moment he is judicially sanctified, no matter how he feels or if he feels anything at all. True, there will be times of blessing and hilarity, but they are not to be depended upon, for feelings are not dependable. It is faith that stands every test.

Some few years ago there came under my observation a man who could not get sanctified. For years he had prayed and sought the Lord. One day he told me that it wasn't for him. He believed in it, for his father was a sanctified man, but it wasn't for him. He felt that he had done all in his power to get the victory, yet did not receive the Holy Spirit of God. I urged him to pray on, keep consecrated, and have faith. Some years passed by, and he quit farming and went to preaching the gospel, and gave me a call to preach a revival in his church. When I arrived at his house I asked him to tell me how he got sanctified, for it was evident that he had done so. He laughed and said: "It was easy. When I promised God I would quit farming and preach the gospel, He sanctified me." He had to consecrate his time, and talent, and all to God. This does not signify that all must quit their work and preach. It might well mean that some will have to quit preaching and work at some other job. But, whatever it involves, there is no other way than obedience. It is bondage, but it is bondage to love.

O sweet will of God, Thou hast girded me round
Like the deep, moving currents that girdle the sea!
With omnipotent love is my poor nature bound,
And that bondage to love sets me perfectly free.

For years my will wrestled with vague discontent
That like a sad angel o'ershadowed my way.
God's light in my soul with darkness was blent

And my breast ever longed for an unclouded day.

My wild will was captured, yet under the yoke.
There was pain, and not peace, at the press of the load,
Till the glorious burden the last fiber broke,
And I melted like wax in the furnace of God.

And now I have flung myself recklessly out
Like a ship on the stream of the Infinite Will.
I pass the rough rocks with a smile and a shout,
And I just let my God His dear purpose fulfill.

I care not for self! All my blessings and pains
I gladly yield up to the mandate above.
My crosses and triumphs, my losses and gains,
I bury them all in the vortex of love.

And now my King Jesus has all His own way;
I want but to catch His low whispering word.
'Tis my bliss to lie low 'neath His scepter's bright sway,
For my triumph I see in each step of my Lord.

Forever I choose this good will of my God,
Its holy, deep riches to love and to know,
The serfdom of love to sweeten the rod,
That its touch maketh rivers of honey to flow.

Roll on, checkered seasons, bring smiles and bring tears.
My soul sweetly sails on an infinite tide.
I shall soon touch the shores of eternity's years,
And near the white throne of my Saviour abide.

-- G. D. Watson & Joseph Garrison

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08 -- WHAT WILL YOU TAKE FOR YOUR SOUL?

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37.)

There are several verses of scripture here that are worthy of our consideration, and which would make first-rate material for a sermon. Several of these truths I mention just in passing: First, there are some forced options laid down. If you lose your life you will save it. If you save it selfishly, you will lose it. Second, there are some determining factors which will influence what Jesus will do with you when He returns the second time. "Whosoever therefore shall be

ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him will also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (verse 38). Then finally there are the truths of the text. I pray God to make them real to you tonight, and if possible persuade you to turn to Him.

* * *

I. The Text Teaches The Existence Of The Soul And Its Possible Forfeiture

Some say the soul does not exist, but the burden of proof lies on those who say this.

If you ask me for a definition of the soul, I will answer, "It is the principle of life, and of the vital acts of thought and will." If you ask me for a definition of principle, I will say that I understand it to be "that which produces anything." Not a metaphor of similitude but of proportion; as the root is to a plant, so is the principle of a thing to its product. The principle of a thing is that which contains the reason for its existence. The soul is not something added to humanity, for man has no existence at all till soul and body are united. It is the soul that distinguishes man from the world of irrational animals. There is consciousness of something within man that is independent of the body, and which will survive when the body dies. That something is called in God's Word the soul. It is indissoluble, and the burden of proof to the contrary lies wholly on those who assert its dissolubility. The idea of the soul's existence is in possession and cannot be dispossessed simply because someone says so. The conclusion we must all reach is that the death of the body affords no proof of the cessation of the intellectual life. Therefore the soul does not die with the body, but survives.

This immaterial entity called the soul is the most valuable possession man will ever have. If he loses it he has lost everything. Once it is lost it can never be regained. There are some losses which cannot be restored, and the loss of the soul is one such loss. If a man forges a check he may receive the money named on its face, but he can never buy back his lost innocence. Judas returned the money he received for Christ, but he could never undo that awful deed of betrayal to death of the Son of God. The loss of the soul is the ruin of guilt, the loss of spiritual faculty, the loss of spiritual power. Consider the eye. It is a very small object and the point of vision is smaller still; but if the eye is fatally injured, all the light of the universe is lost. Consider the ear. It is so small an organ, but if it loses its hearing every tender voice, every familiar tone, every sweet note of music goes with it. If the soul is lost everything of ultimate value is lost with it -- God, heaven, hope.

* * *

II. There Is Taught The Lesson That The Soul May Be Lost In The Search For Things That Wouldn't Satisfy If They Were Obtained

"If he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Would the things of the present world pay for the loss of the soul in the end? Ten thousand times, No!

It is a terrible thing to be lost. To be lost physically is a tragedy. A group of friends went to Colorado for a summer vacation in famous Estes Park. Among them was a little girl four years old, named Shirley. One morning early they went fishing, leaving little Shirley asleep in her bed. It was one of those rare occasions when the trout were striking, and the adults became so engrossed in their success catching fish that they forgot little Shirley. Finally someone remembered her and they returned to camp, only to find her little bed empty. They followed her little footprints around the camp, and down to the water's edge. There they lost them in the wet sand, at the point where they disappeared in the water. Three days they searched for her, and the evening of the third day they found her at the bottom of a waterfall lodged between two rocks. The fishing trip broke up, and they returned to their homes in the East. Most of them have recovered from the awful loss. But two of them have not recovered, nor will they ever recover. They have grown prematurely old; their hair has turned white too soon. Now and then one may be heard saying to the other, "How could we have become so engrossed in catching scaly, slimy fish that we would forget our curly-haired little darling?"

To be lost mentally is a calamity. When reason reels and totters from its throne, leaving one in mental darkness, it is tragedy supreme. One visit to the huge psychopathic hospitals of the land is sufficient to prove that. The pain, the bewilderment, the uncertainty, the loneliness, the loss, the fear are indescribable. However, if the mentally lost are missed by someone who cares, and they are placed under the right care, the proper diet, and the right nursing, they may be found again. Many have been.

To be lost spiritually is the greatest loss. Not the spiritual lostness that every unregenerate sinner suffers in the present only, but the ultimate, eternal, irrevocable lostness of the soul that has sealed its doom by disobedience and sin -- this loss is the fearful possibility that faces all men.

* * *

III. Some Petals Which May Cause The Loss Of The Soul

1. Wrong attachments, wrong associations, are a peril. Many are in sin today because of the friendships they have made. Friendships prevent their turning to Christ. Friends mock and scoff at New Testament Christianity. Habits have taken a death grip upon the physical appetites-tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and a host of other evil practices that have become so prevalent that it would seem the whole world of men are determined to damn their souls by participation in them.

There are many who would be seekers at the sanctifying altar for the rich blessing of heart purity if it were not for their friends who disbelieve. There are many, old and young, who would turn to Christ if it were not for the sneers of friends who are determined to follow evil.

2. Slight cures are a peril to your soul. We have had them ever since the days of Jeremiah, when that weeping prophet cried, "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." There are false religions everywhere, but only Christ gives peace of mind and of heart. Modern religions and isms have

lured thousands from Christ: New Thought, Christian Science, Eternal Security, Adventism, Russellism, and others. They have all taken their toll of souls for whom Christ died. They all cry, "Peace," but they do not provide peace.

3. Carnality is a peril to the soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This principle of sin Paul says is producing a behavior in men that baffles them. They find themselves doing things they do not want to do, and not doing things they want to do. They find they have the will to do good, but they lack the power. They never accomplish the good they set out to do, and the evil they do not really want to do they find themselves always doing. They are unwilling prisoners to the law of sin and death that dwelleth in them. It is an agonizing situation, and they cry, "Who on earth can set us free from the clutches of our own sinful natures?" This sin that makes its home in man, if not removed by the sanctifying baptism with the Holy Spirit, will work the utter ruin and eternal loss of the soul.

4. Death before conversion is a peril to the soul. Do not be deceived by those who tell you there will be another chance after death to make peace with God. The Bible, as well as all reason, is against that. If one starts, as all do, in this life innocent and sinless, lives thirty or seventy years and dies a spiritual failure, what hope does one have to start out in another, future, life, already a failure, and make good? If these spreaders of false teachings would be one-half as earnest in spreading the gospel of Christ as they are in spreading delusion, the world could be won to Jesus in ten years, it would seem. If peace with God is to be obtained, it must be on this side of death.

5. The second coming of Jesus is a peril of the soul. He is coming back again for His people. The same Scriptures that foretold His first coming, and proved correct, foretell His second coming, and will prove correct. He will come! "We know.., he shall appear" (I John 3:1-3).

* * *

Conclusion:

Let me ask you, What will you give in exchange for your soul? What could you give? Time? It is all spent; there is none left to give. Opportunities? They are all trifled away. Talents? They are all squandered, and gone.

To whom would you give in exchange for your soul? Jesus? He has been rejected. The Holy Spirit? He has departed, grieved, from your life.

* * *

Lost

Lost to the sound of the Spirit's sweet call,
Lost to the gift of God's "ransom for all,"

Lost in eternal gloom wrought by the fall!
Lost! There is pardon no more.

Lost amid sermons where Sabbath light gleamed,
Lost mid the pleadings of God's own redeemed,
Lost while the family altar's light streamed!
Lost! The fond pleadings are o'er.

Lost the earth's pleasures that once the soul won,
Lost earth's fond friendships to sorrow alone,
Lost amid ruined hope, ever undone!
Lost! The enchantment is o'er.

Lost to the home where the holy shall dwell,
Lost to the songs that the ransomed shall swell,
Lost to the city that knows no death knell!
Lost! Dear ones beckon no more.

Lost where the billows of torment e'er roll,
Lost where God's wrath-flame envelops the soul,
Lost where no gleam of hope comes to console!
Lost! Lost in eternity's gloom.

(Author unknown)

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09 -- WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? (Matt. 27:22.)

Life is an endless chain of choice-making. Every day the choice must be made about who shall be served, which road shall be trodden, how life shall be lived. In almost every department of life where a choice must be made, there is an expert's answer to be had. If the question is one about the physical, there are expert medical doctors. If the question is one of finance, there is a specialist in that field. But the question of the text brings all men face to face with an issue which must be settled alone. No other one can answer the question for us. It is the most important question any man can ever consider. There is life and death in the answer. Answer this question rightly and everything that is worth while is added. Do the wrong thing about Jesus and everything that is worth having is lost now and forever.

The history that surrounds the text and the story that leads up to it are sad but instructive. A crowd of angry people captained by a backslidden preacher went into the Garden of Gethsemane and captured Jesus. They arrested Him and took Him away to trial, first before white-haired old Annas and then on to Caiaphas. They found Him innocent but they proclaimed

Him guilty. Then because they could not, being Jews, pronounce the death penalty upon Him, they took Him to Pilate, the Roman ruler, demanding that he sentence the Redeemer to death.

They arrested Him without grounds, and accused Him without cause. Their indictment of Him was trumped up and perjured. They accused Him of treason, and based their accusation on three counts, any one of which was a capital crime if proved. First, they said, He is a seditionist stirring up the people to revolt. Second, they accused Him of opposing Caesar, the emperor. Third, they said He claimed to be King himself. There was some truth in these accusations, but not the kind of truth that merited execution on a cross. He was a Revolutionist, but only in the same sense that a good medicine will revolutionize a sick body. He was opposed to Caesar, but only in the same sense that Caesar was opposed to the truth. He did then claim to be King, and still makes that claim -- not taking over armies, governments, and economics, but a King over principle and a King over truth; not a king over Rome, but over the entire spiritual world. A King, but they mockingly clothed Him in purple! A King, but they gave Him thorns for a crown! A King, but they placed in His hand a reed for a scepter! A King for all of that!

Pilate was troubled because of this strange Prisoner. Every man is troubled when brought into the light of His presence. Pilate, like many others, made several attempts to rid himself of the responsibility of doing something with Jesus. His first attempt was to shift the responsibility to other shoulders; he sent Him to Herod. The king questioned Him and sent Him right back to Pilate. The procurator's second effort was to make the people choose. He stood Christ before them beside Barabbas and said, "Whom shall I deliver unto you this day?" They cried for Barabbas, but let Jesus be crucified. His third attempt was to scourge the Christ with whips. But the people became the more angry and cried, "Not a few drops of His blood, but the last drop!" Pilate made one last and vain effort to free himself from this fearful responsibility; he took water and washed his hands, saying, "See ye to it." They did, and cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Let His blood be upon us and upon our children, but crucify Him!" That moment they heard the clock strike midnight for them as a nation.

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I. Notice The Object Of The Choice Before Us

"Jesus... called Christ." Who is He? He is the greatest Man that ever lived on the earth. He is the greatest Teacher, the greatest Evangelist, the greatest Preacher, the greatest Philosopher, the greatest Friend to man that ever lived. He is the sinner's Friend. What a thought! Friend of sinners! Beside Him every other man appears selfish and second rate. On an occasion Emerson asked a group of literary men what each would do if Bacon, Plato, Socrates, or Shakespeare should suddenly come into the room. They all answered, "We would rise and recognize his literary genius and ability." He then asked them what they would do if Jesus should suddenly walk into the room. Without exception they answered, "We would kneel."

Jesus is the Saviour. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." But at the name of Jesus sin loses its grip and its power and men are made free. Dr. C. W. Troxel, for years missionary to China, told the story of a Chinese pagan woman who heard her first gospel message, and was saved. She had walked twenty miles to hear the

Good News, and walked twenty miles back home. The next morning she had forgotten the name of her newfound Saviour. She walked twenty miles back to the missionary's home to hear the name again. When she went through the door of the mission station she went saying, "Oh, I know He saves me, but I have forgotten His name. Will you tell me that name again?" The missionary told her again the name of Jesus. She cried, joyfully, "Oh, yes! That's the name. It is Jesus." And she started out again on her twenty-mile hike home, saying His name over and over again so she would never forget it. There is no other name like His name.

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II. Notice The Opportunities In The Choice

What can men do with Jesus? There are some things men can do with Him and there are some things men cannot do with Him.

What men cannot do with Jesus. First, they cannot get rid of Him. Evil men have been trying to get rid of Him for two thousand years. When wise men followed a new star to His cradle manger, they passed by Herod's house. They asked the king to see the new heir to the throne, but were informed by the ruler that no son had been born in his home that night. He then told the Magi to go find the new king, and return to inform him of the location so that he, too, might go to worship him. That moment Herod began to plot the death of Jesus. Wicked men became the human instruments in Christ's death on the cross, and they laid Him in a grave. But even the grave couldn't hold Jesus. He came out of that tomb on the third day to prove himself God, and open doors to eternal life for all who would believe.

Tom Paine, Voltaire, Hume, Ingersoll, and all the rest of their atheistic followers have tried to get rid of Jesus. Tom Paine wrote his book *The Age of Reason* and when he completed the manuscript he laughed with diabolical mirth, and cried: "There is a book that will destroy the Bible. Twenty-five years from now if one wants to see a Bible he will have to go to a museum and spend twenty-five cents to see the exploded relic of an exploded exposition." But the very house in which he sat to write his book has been purchased by the American Bible Society and is stacked from the cellar to the garret with Bibles in every printable language. You can't get rid of Jesus.

Second, you cannot mistake Him for someone else. Satan may come as "an angel of light" and deceive, if possible, the very elect, but when Jesus speaks to the soul He is recognized for who He is. His voice is the voice of authority, the unmistakable voice of God. Even His enemies said of Him, "He spake as one having authority." He does have authority. He is himself the embodiment of authority. His word is the last word. There is no appeal from His sentence; there is no higher court than His court.

Third, you cannot change His terms of discipleship. He laid them down two thousand years ago and they stand today. He said, "Repent," and there is no other way out of guilt. He said, "Confess your sins," and never has a sin been forgiven but it was first confessed. He said, "Love your enemies," and there is no other way to get along with Him. He said, "Deny yourself," and only thus can you get along with yourself.

There are some things that men can do with Jesus. They can admire Him as a teacher but reject His divinity. But He is more than the teacher of ethics. Our salvation depends upon His being divine. His teachings are unexcelled but they are impossible to live without His power of regeneration. It takes new life for one to keep the Golden Rule in spirit as well as by rule.

Men can admit His claim and postpone the answer. They can believe and accept every New Testament claim for Christ, and postpone the personal choice and be lost. This, many are doing to their own eternal detriment.

On the other hand, they can accept Him today and go free from sin. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18). The man who receives Him as Saviour becomes a child of God. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Not by doing good, but by receiving Him. Men can reject Him and go under the threat of His judgment. It is in your power to say no to His will.

* * *

III. Notice What Depends On The Choice

There are eternal issues involved here. Having peace in this life depends on what you do with Jesus. Old Ananias chose against Christ and died in disgrace. His home was plundered and ruined. His son was beaten and dragged to a horrible death.

Caiaphas lost his position and never regained it.

Herod died of a loathsome disease, banished to exile, and in dishonor and public disgrace.

Pilate took his own life in exile by jumping from the window of a castle, which stands today as a monument to his friendship with the world and indicates the spot from which Pilate went to hell. Judas joined Pilate in dispatching his own life into the dark and his own soul into hell.

Jerusalem, the joy of the earth, has been plundered by a dozen wars, and its inhabitants have been scattered throughout the earth for two millennia.

* * *

IV. Notice What You Have Done With Him And See The Ultimate Consequence Of Such Action

Some, like Peter, have denied Him as they warmed their chilly hands by the world's fire. Some, like Demas, have forsaken Him in their love and attraction to the world. Others, like Judas, have followed Him only for the moneybags. Even their Christian testimony and life have been selfish ones. They liked the loaves and the fishes but they cared little for the Master. Their

sentences are already written. Jesus said: "Whosoever... shall be ashamed of me... in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). He, in returning, will do with you exactly what you are doing with Him when He arrives. Oh, what will you do with Him?

An appeal has been written, by whom I do not know. I give it to you, hoping that you will heed and turn to Christ.

"Fleet-footed time as he gallops on at a fearful speed cries to you, 'Choose Christ.' The ghastly monster, death, the clatter of whose hoofs can be heard on the shores of time, waving his poisonous sting and pursuing you at a rapid pace, warns you to 'choose Christ.' Lost souls in their torment point to the cross of Christ, and with all the eloquence of their lost lips scream to you, 'Choose Christ.' The judgment day, with its lightning flash, pealing thunder, rocking, reeling world, record books, crying sinners, and shouting saints, cries out, 'Choose Christ.' Mercy, long rejected and long outraged, with all the melting pathos of her sweet lips, entreats you to 'choose Christ.' Bright, shining angels, as their immortal forms crowd the gilded galleries of the celestial city, turn their radiant faces to Calvary's cleansing fountain, and with all the earnestness of their angelic voices shout to you, 'Choose Christ.' Loved ones in heaven bend over the bannered battlements of their heavenly home and with outstretched hands are beckoning you and crying, 'Choose Christ.' What will you do?"

Think! Sum up! If you do not accept Him you reject Him. What will you decide?

* * * * *

10 -- IF -- WHERE?

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (I Pet. 4:18.)

"Great is the mystery of godliness." There are many mysterious things about the Divine Being and His program. The Bible is a mystery. It has weathered many a storm, gone through the fires of the atheists' attacks, outlived its every antagonist, accompanied man on his long trek through the world, and stands today as the living Word of God. The birth of Jesus is a mystery. His life is a mystery. His teachings are a mystery. His death and resurrection are mysteries. It is mysterious, too, that, while He may be found by obedience to His Word and through faith, He may also be lost through disobedience and unbelief. The sinner's salvation is a mystery, and it is a mystery how the righteous are "scarcely... saved."

It is a difficult thing for the sinner to be saved initially. It involves difficult procedures on the part of both man and God. That statement is reverently made; nevertheless, it is made. (a) Man's part is difficult because he must see himself a sinner; admit his sinful condition. He must face the embarrassment and humiliation of losing face, and recognizing that he is not only lost but unable to save himself. He is not so good, nor so able, nor strong as he considered himself to be. This conviction for sin is a terrible experience. It carries with it guilt, fear, sentence, and punishment. The loss and the peril are made doubly bad by the fact that only one sin can sink the

sinner. One sin can bring the transgressor under the frown of God and put him outside the circle of safety. "Without God in the world." "Strangers from the covenant." (b) Man's part is difficult because beginning to believe is not easy. Some think it is easy; but the prophet cried, "Who hath believed?" Again, Jesus asks, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth"? Believing is required but oftentimes it is not an easy thing. (c) Man's part is difficult also because he must repent and confess his sins. Repentance is a bitter medicine, and confession is harder still. Repentance and confession of sins involve admission of self-guilt, and forsaking of sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord... he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). (d) Man's part is rendered difficult by the requirement to accept forgiveness. If there were any other way out of sin than forgiveness, we would take it. It is humiliating to go to one against whom wrong has been done, admit the wrong, plead for pardon, and then receive the acquittal of which one is completely unworthy. If you think forgiveness is an easy thing, then you do not know what it means to be forgiven.

Salvation and forgiveness are difficult things for God. That sounds strange when one remembers all Jesus had to say about forgiveness and mercy. But it is true. Forgiveness is difficult for God because of His great love for sinners. He loves not only the transgressor but also the one sinned against. When He thought of pardoning the unjust landlord for excluding from his property the widow who couldn't pay her rent, He was forced to remember the suffering widow. Forgiveness is difficult for God because with Him sin is a serious matter. It results in losses that can never be regained, mistakes that can never be rectified, injuries that can never be healed. Forgiveness cost God His only begotten Son, cost the Son His life's blood, and cost heaven its most loved and revered Prince. Salvation is costly and therefore difficult.

* * *

I. The Text Declares The Righteous Scarcely Are Saved

Those who have surrendered to Christ, taken His cross, worn His yoke, and walked the narrow path are scarcely saved. Why?

A. Because the divine rule is strict. "Judgment must begin at the house of God." We are instructed again and again to "examine" ourselves to see if we be in the faith. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Self-giving is not optional in the kingdom of God. There is no excuse accepted as valid; self has to go.

"Love your enemies." No matter what they have done, how they have persecuted you, scorned you. That is difficult! But it is gloriously possible, for Jesus said, "I am with you."

"Bless them that curse you." They will persecute you, they will ridicule you, they will make it hard for you, they will curse you; but bless them, and curse not. "Pray for them that despitefully use you." "Overcome evil with good." "Avenge not yourselves."

These things are not easy; but they are required. The tests are many and varied. We are attacked on every side, persecuted on every hand, cast down and frowned upon; and the end is

not yet, for Jesus said that the time would come when men would kill the disciples and think they were doing God's service. But go "the second mile," give your cloak when men steal your coat, lend to others when they ask you.

The righteous judgment of the omnipotent God is to come. Sometimes when we think of it we tremble with fear, especially in the face of the text, "If the righteous scarcely be saved." There is only one plea -- the Blood. It was shed, it avails, it protects, it will never let you down. Hallelujah for the Blood!

B. The experiences of the children of God show the seriousness of the strain. But the victors sing:

"Tell me not of heavy crosses,
Nor of burdens hard to bear,
For I've found this great salvation
Makes each burden light appear."

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews reveals something of the test and the strain. Begin with verse 36 and the record is vivid: "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." That is a dismal chapter in their history; but "these all., obtained a good report through faith."

C. Hear the testimony concerning the victors safe in heaven: "These are they which came out of great tribulation."

They crossed through storms and trials,
And oft the fight was long;
But they've joined the victors' triumph,
And they shared the victors' song.

* * *

II. What Of The Ungodly And The Sinner?

The righteous person's only triumph is Jesus. What of the ungodly and sinful? They have no God. "Without God in the world." They have no Saviour. "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me... before this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

They have not the Holy Spirit to guide them. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 7:9).

They have no hope and they have no heaven. Where shall they appear? What can they say?

The fate of the ungodly is told in no uncertain language in Jude, verses 14 and 15. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Where will mere professors of religion appear then? If the godly must fight for their faith, where will the formalist, the false professor, the presumptuous appear? Jesus makes that plain. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?... then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22, 23).

Why will such appear at all? They will appear to be judged. They will appear finally to be brought to their knees before Christ, for "every knee should bow... and... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10-11). Yes, they will appear, from every quarter of the earth, from every corner of the world; the red, the yellow, the black, the white, they all will appear.

* * *

III. The Real Meaning Of The Righteous' Being Scarcely Saved

Does that mean there is to be a doubt of their final salvation if they abide steadfast and faithful? Does it mean there will be any imperfection in their final enjoyment of heaven. No! Does it then mean that when believers come to stand before God at the final judgment it will be hard with them, so that they barely get inside heaven by the "skin of their teeth"? Does it mean the result will poise long and uncertainly over their heads, barely turning to the favorable side? No! a thousand times no! "Scarcely be saved" means there were difficulties in bringing them through to the final victory. It means there was need of the chastening rod and the refining furnace to keep them on the path of holiness and bring them through corrected and purified. It means they were brought to the heavenly shore through the "fire and flood." It means they came through "great tribulation." It means they were corrected by the Lord so they would not be condemned with the world.

Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Not before Christ, for it is the "pure in heart" only who shall see Him. Not in heaven, for it is the inheritance for the pure and undefiled.

Where then? Only one possibility is left. They are lost. They will then go to their own place as Judas went to his (Acts 1:25). An impenitent, persistent sinner prefers hell to heaven -- and though he may be miserable in hell, he would be still more so in heaven were he forced to go there.

Go to yonder tavern, and say to that bloated father, "My friend, let us leave this place of hunger, wretchedness, disease, and death, and seek Christian society, where you will find plenty,

happiness, health, and life." He would say, "No." Unless the Divine Spirit touched his heart, and he repented and forsook the evil, he would still prefer this gambling brothel to the virtuous Christian home. If you were to force him to church, and to hear the songs of praise for redeeming love, he would not be happy. Force him to keep company with virtuous men and women at all times, and his misery would only increase. Until his heart and his heart's desires were changed, no force would make him happy. Man begins his hell as soon as he begins to do and love the wrong. Sin and its slaves, Satan and his followers, "love darkness rather than light," hell rather than heaven, "because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19).

Aristotle, without doubt, was the greatest logician among men. Read the seventh book of his Ethics, and observe how clearly he distinguishes between strong will to wickedness and weak self-indulgence. So I think that the man who reads the Sermon on the Mount, and then willfully sins against the moral law, sins more determinedly than the man who "sins against the light of nature." Future punishment has a foothold in the human reason, or it could not have maintained itself against all the recoil and opposition which it elicits from the human heart. The idea of endless punishment for the wicked is founded in ethics, founded in law, founded in judicial reason, taught by the Author of Christianity. There is no other place for the ungodly to appear, and there they shall appear.

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11 -- WHY DO YOU WAIT?

Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee (Ps. 39:7).

These are the words of a king. They sound strange coming from his lips. He was rich and much increased in goods. He was popular and powerful. He had servants and slaves and attendants. He had everything his heart desired that money could provide, and gifts as splendid as any on earth. Yet he cried out, "My hope is in thee."

Oh, that men would see this truth today! They place their hopes in things that fail. Money-mad men put their hopes in riches, and they who strive for it are unhappy in their strife, and they who obtain it are miserable in their greed. Devotees of fashion and pride are never satisfied with their lot. The vestures they put on fade and decay. Their yearning hearts find no peace. They let down all bars of right living, give free rein to their passions, and then find themselves feverish and unhappy and dissatisfied. They sadden their age with Solomon's cry, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Some seek satisfaction in knowledge. They learn and pass their knowledge along to others, and remain disturbed, and distressed, and denied of the very thing they hoped for -- peace of mind. They "heap to themselves teachers having itching ears," and they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," for the truth is in Christ Jesus, whom they reject and deny.

David, like the prodigal son, "came to himself," arose and returned. He saw, in time, the folly of his neglect. Neglect is the universal sin. Thousands remain outside of Christ, not because of their wickedness, but because of their neglect. They have every intention of becoming Christians before they die, but mistakenly believe they have time enough yet.

The story, mythical and far-fetched, is told of Satan holding a conference with his servants. The discussion was about ways and means to win the world from God to himself. One servant of evil said, "Master, let me go. I'll win the world to you." "What will you tell them?" asked Satan. "I'll tell them there is no God," came the reply. "That will not do," said Satan. "They know there is a God." Another emissary of evil came saying, "O Satan, let me go. I will capture them for you." "And what will you tell them?" said Satan. "I will tell them there is a God, but that He is a tyrant. There is no justice in Him." "You will not do," cried Satan. "They know there is a God and they know that He is a just God." Still a third servant came and said, "Let me go, for I can take their stronghold. I know just what to say." "What will it be?" asked Satan. "I will tell them there is a God, and that He is a just God. But I will tell them there is time enough yet. No need to hurry. Have a good time in sin, pamper your passions, get something out of life, and later turn to God." "Go! Go!" cried Satan. "Those are just the words to say. They will heed those words."

"Time enough yet" has been the eternal ruin of many souls. Procrastination is the arch thief of souls. In fact, I suppose that neglect is the universal sin. More men remain away from Christ through neglect than through any other ten sins. It is the blight of the spirit. The text reveals it to be one of the earliest sins, as well as a prevailing modern sin. David felt its power and turned to God, crying, "Why do I wait? You are my Hope!"

There are two sides to this sin of neglect, of which so many are guilty: the negative side and the positive side.

* * *

First, The Negative Side

There are some things which no man can legitimately use as an excuse for neglect.

A. No man waits until he becomes guilty and needs to be saved. "God hath concluded all under sin." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Man stands a guilty sinner with nothing to commend him to God. His lostness is complete and his only hope is Christ.

One needs but read a few verses found in the third chapter of Romans for a word picture of the guilty world, beginning at verse 10 and continuing through verse 18: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."

Every unconverted sinner can find his description somewhere in that passage of Holy Writ. How lost man is may be found in God's Word. First, he is sold under sin (Rom. 7:14). King David said, "I was shapen in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5). Second, there is no hope in man to save

himself, for "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:6). Third, at the age of accountability every man has sinned by choice. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

Not only does man stand guilty in the light of the Scriptures, but he also stands condemned before the court of his own conscience. Conscience, too, is a master detective, discovering hidden and unrevealed sin. Conscience is a sure voice of the law, speaking in tones of thunder and revelation, convincing each of his sins. Martin Luther said of a guilty conscience, "It is a raging hell and a tormenting devil." Pythagoras said of it, "It is that something which accuses a man to himself, and does it so loudly that he goes out to accuse himself before the whole world." Hence the Biblical statement, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." And the adage, "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." Man's own standards of right and wrong prove him guilty. "Why did I do that thing?" is the cry I hear all over the land. Men realize the net is closing in on them and they are squirming in defeat and stained by sins they never intended to commit. But they did commit them, and they now stand guilty by their own standards. Why? Because God has written His laws on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Sin writes its own story of sorrow and disappointment in the lives of its victims. Let there be no mistake about it, sin is a deadly illness. Its symptoms are evident even to men who do not know its name; for in pagan lands, where the Bible and its standards of morality have never been known, men are conscious of personal guilt.

B. No man waits for a Saviour to come. Once they could cry, "Is there no eye to pity? Is there no one to save?" Once they could ask, "Does no man care for my soul?" Not any more! The Saviour is here! To us who sat under the shadow of death there have come light and deliverance. Salvation for all! Salvation enough for all! Salvation to cover every sin! Salvation to give peace to every sin-troubled breast! Salvation to open heaven's gates! No wonder the angel chorus sang, "Glory to God in the highest"! For the Saviour has come with power. No sinner so deep-dyed but He can save him. No backslider gone back so far but He can restore him. No soul so habit-bound but He can free him. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." No need to wait longer for one to save. He is here! Sing it to the ends of the earth. Shout it until every man in every place has heard it. The Saviour has come!

C. No man waits because he has any reason to doubt Christ's willingness to save him. To those who have sought Him He never said no. Never yet has He turned away one who earnestly and sincerely came to Him for salvation. He saved the thief on the cross; He saved David, a murderer, home-breaker, and adulterer; He saved Mary, the Magdalene, when she was shot through the heart by the archer of hell and was down for the count; He saved Peter from his backslidings. No man ever went so deep in sin, nor so far from God, but that Jesus will save him if he surrenders completely. Men and women of modern times, whose lustful looks have won for them the fruit of adultery, whose selfishness has driven them to deceit and murder, have come to God crying, "I have sinned; restore to me the joy of Thy salvation," and have found it. Moral men like Nicodemus, the educator, who, it would seem, need no further equipment for life's journey, cry, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The reply comes readily, "Ye must be born again." No wonder its name is gospel! Good News! News so good that it even beautifies the feet

of its carriers! News so good that its hearers have forsaken riches and home, loved ones and friends, to share it with those who have never heard it!

I was preaching in a mission in Denver one Christmas holiday season. A man stumbled into the mission and listened to the sermon. He then came forward for prayer. After confessing his sins, he stood upright, his hands up in the air, and his face shining like an angel's, and cried:

"Ten years ago I killed a man. I have been in the state prison for ten years. Yesterday I was released. As I stood in the warden's office, he gave me a ten-dollar bill, a suit of clothes, and a train ticket to Denver, and said, 'Tom, you are a pretty good sort of fellow, and I think you can make it if you try.' I told him: 'Keep a room for me, warden; I'll be back in a few days. When I started out on this path of murder, I purposed to kill two men. I got one of them and you got me. If the other one still lives, and I can find him, I will kill him if it is the last thing I ever do.' I came to Denver last night and this morning I found out where that man lives. I was on my way tonight to kill him, and I have right here in my pocket what I need. [And he had it too.] But as I passed this mission I heard you preaching. I came inside, and now the Lord has saved me. You saved my soul and that man's life by preaching the gospel. Now I don't want to kill anybody."

Say, I wanted to jump over a wall and run through a troop. Praise God for the privilege of employing my lips to preach the kind of gospel that gives hope to sinners!

* * *

Second, The Positive Side

In spite of the encouragement to everyone to seek Christ, the fact remains that many are yet waiting. Why? The excuses are various but groundless.

A. Some wait, like Felix, for a convenient season. They vainly hope that obtaining salvation will be made easier at a future time. There is death in that cup! Every day you remain away from Christ makes it that much more improbable that you will ever turn to Him. Every day in sin piles more guilt upon the load until it seems too heavy to bear, but too shameful to confess. No season will be more convenient. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." There is no indication in Scripture that Felix ever found that convenient season for which he waited.

Today sweet mercy lingers.
Tomorrow death may come
And touch with icy fingers
Your heart; it spareth none.

B. Some wait until they have had enough of this world. They are in love with this world, and their treasure is here; and where the treasure is, there will the heart be. But has such a man ever been known -- one who had enough of this world? Has ever a devotee of fashion reached the point where he had enough? Has ever sinful appetite been gorged until it had enough? No! For the course of sin is such that an act committed which brings pleasure must be often repeated

to bring the same pleasure. The law is one of diminishing returns, and soon you are doomed to sin and get no pleasure from it, and then sin has become a treadmill. Do not wait until you have had enough. Turn today, renounce every sin, and plead for mercy. You shall have it.

C. Some wait to prove themselves more worthy to come. They hope to come to Christ with a lighter load. But for them, doom has cracked! There is no way to become better except to be made whole by His power. Come as you are.

Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

All our righteousness outside of Christ is as "filthy rags" and does not commend us to God. Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep"; if any man "climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." We are to come just as we are!

D. Some wait until they are older. They think that the passing years will dull their appetite for evil. They say, "I am too young now. I want to have a good time for a while. Later I'll become a Christian." They are mistaken, for it does not rob life of a good time to be a Christian; it rather turns every activity of life into Christian channels, where they can be enjoyed more and more. The waiting for the passing of youth is often fatal, especially in these times of war, when Death prides itself in the strength of the castle it overthrows.

E. Some wait for time to change their circumstances. I knew a man who was smitten with conviction for his sins. He would never yield to Christ. I discovered he was waiting in the hope that another, against whom he had sinned, would die first. Then he could get saved without making restitution. That is presumptuous living, against which the Scriptures warn us again and again.

F. Some wait for loved ones. "I cannot live for Christ alone," they say. But your soul is too valuable to lose carelessly while waiting for others who may always reject Christ.

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The Folly Of Neglect

Desire fades with the passing of the years, and Scriptures urge, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." And again we read. "Desire shall fail." Evil days are coming. Again, loyalties make demands that will not permit a reversal of activity, which the new birth demands. And, too, habits are formed that are all but impossible to break -- tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, hate, sex habits, traits of temper.

It is foolish to neglect salvation because of what you miss that can never be regained. Joy, fellowship with God and God's people, a clear conscience, friendship with Jesus, the aid of God's power in temptation, the bliss that only the Blood-washed know -- all this is irrevocably forfeited.

It is foolish because of the hurtful influence while unsaved. A son, a daughter, an entire family is injured, possibly beyond repair, by one member's influence. Sometimes it is the hurtful influence of parents, who, if they realized what they were about, could not be induced to do such work for any consideration.

Finally, "There is a sin unto death..." Do not wait! Turn now!

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THE END