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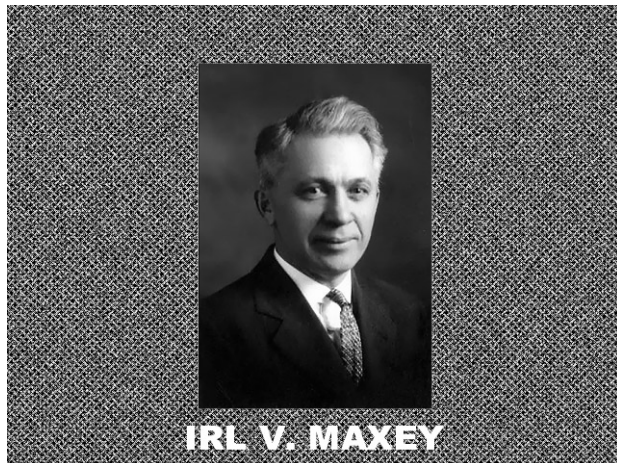
**THEREFORE, CHOOSE LIFE
A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey**

**Digitized and Edited
By Duane V. Maxey**

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**Digital Edition 01/26/06
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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

Let me begin this introduction by saying that while the written version of my father's sermons are not lengthy, I doubt that he preached most of them audibly as rapidly as one can read the written versions. However, I cannot tell from experience just how long papa generally preached, because I was only 6 years old the last time I heard him. I do remember him preaching under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, shouting as I recall, and hopping about the platform in a holy dance waving his handkerchief -- this, when I was only 5, in De Smet, South Dakota.

Like others in the same notebook, this sermon was written in Imbler, Oregon. It is dated as November 6, 1913. But, I think it was probably finished by my oldest brother John Caldwell Maxey. About the last page and a half are in a different

handwriting, with "Finished by J. M." at the end of the sermon. Though John was not born until December 29, 1913 -- a bit beyond a month beyond the date of this sermon -- I think he may have known the conclusion of the sermon from having heard papa preach it when he was a boy or youth.

Once again, it is I who have titled the sermon, and in so doing I have chosen three words as the sermon title from the concluding verse with which "J. M." ended it. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, January 26, 2006.

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You will find our text in the 8th verse of the 21st chapter of Jeremiah.

SERMON TEXT: -- Jeremiah 21:8 -- "And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death."

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The ways are placed before us in the Bible. We will find the way of life described and the blessedness of those who walk therein with their final reward. Or, you will find the way of death pointed out and the awful unhappy lives of those who walk this way and their final reward.

Oh, blessed Book! -- mine to show a rebel's doom! -- mine to show a saint's reward!

The ways are constantly held up before us in the sermons we hear. Hear the voice of God in the preacher as he says Beware, the way thou walkest is the way of death! Or, Thou art walking with God, and "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

But no more are these ways shown clearer than in our consciences. Concerning one way, this inward monitor says: "This is wrong -- this is death." The other way, this inward monitor approves, saying, "This is life."

Yes, the ways are thus pointed out to us, but they are truly before us. We must choose one way or the other. Yea, we WILL so choose.

When we come into this world, we journey on a while without thinking -- yea, without knowing the way we tread. Life is happy and nothing mars this happiness, nor crosses our path, till suddenly we come to the parting of the way. We have reached accountability -- the choice is made, and thus we journey one way or the other.

'Tis true the ways start from the same point and diverge slowly. Let me illustrate with that old story of Hercules which ran something like this:

Hercules is a boy 12 years of age. His folks send him to perform a certain task of labor. He starts out from the house in great glee. On he goes down the road. The sun is shining brightly and the birds are singing, and the very air seems filled with happiness. He is not thinking of the road he is on -- only the task he is to perform.

But suddenly he comes to where the roads part -- one bears off to the right a little, and the other to the left. Now, he is fully conscious that he is on a road -- that he must go one road or the other. He must decide at this point. He stands there thinking, and while thus in indecision a gaily dressed lady appears on the left road.

"Oh, Hercules," she says, "come my way. You will find so many children to play with down this road -- the way is broad, level, and easy. Oh, such beautiful flowers are blooming, there is fine singing and large shade-trees where you can play and rest."

While the lady was still talking to him, a neatly dressed woman with large, pure eyes and such a happy look on her face, came walking down the path to his right. She said, "Hercules, my boy, come and go my way. The way is narrow and you will see few children to play with -- yet, those on the road are such good children. It is not easy, for it sometimes leads over stony places and through the dismal valley where the mists and fog hang low, and the traveling is very hard. The way leads you over a sullen stream to where the road ascends the mountain. Up its sides you go to where all manner of flowers bloom, the air is so pure, and the view commanding. Yet, while the way is hard, in the end you will obtain the riches of the Blue Mountains."*

[I find it interesting here, that papa refers to the Blue Mountains, for there in Imbler, Oregon he was actually in, or very near a range of mountains called "The Blue Mountains."]

Hercules turned to the lady on right, and asks, "What is your name?"

She replies, "I am Labor."

Hercules then says, "I will take the way of Labor, though it is hard. I want something in the end."

Oh, children! choose and travel the way of life! The way of death is natural and easy and smooth. Many children choose this way. It is so broad that one does not have to try to keep the way.

Oh, sinful soul! you will always find plenty of company going this way. If you want to spend your life in sin you will find a great many drinking, cursing, dancing, and whiling life away with whom you can associate. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13).

This way is so deceitful -- the appeal is: "Why not go the way folks want you to go and not oppose them? Is it not the best way?" But, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

This way is pleasurable indeed. Surely there is pleasure in sin -- swift, certain, all-absorbing pleasure in sins of the body and soul -- but no abiding happiness. 'Tis all animal delight. Our conscience is uneasy, and we flee at a shadow.

This way ends in hell. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..." (Revelation 14:9-11)

Oh, death and hell are the end of this way!

I once read of a man whose life was given to the broad way. He was a business man. He had only one daughter -- Gretchen. She was the idol of his heart. His wife was a good, kind woman, but Oh! Gretchen was so much to him. She would run out to meet him every noon and evening when he came home from work.

One day he came home and Gretchen did not meet him. He hurried into the house to find her awfully sick and the doctor there. For several weeks they labored hard to save her from the inroads of fever, but to no avail. The doctor did his best, his last, and then plainly told her father the end was near.

Death soon flapped his sable wings and claimed her body, but a bright angel from heaven bare her soul away to God's Home. She was tenderly laid away midst profuse flowers. Time passed. Day after day when he came home he looked for her at the spot where she always met him.

One day he came home at noon, tired and sleepy. He missed the girl at the accustomed spot. He went in and waited a while for his wife to get dinner. He slept. He dreamed. He was going somewhere and came to a dark, rolling stream. He looked just across the waters and there was Gretchen waving her hand and saying, "Oh, papa, come this way." He ran up the stream looking for a bridge, still keeping

his eye on Gretchen -- then down the stream, but no bridge. All of a sudden the Savior stood before him and said, "I am the way." The dark waters fled, he got to his child, he woke.

He quit the way of death and became converted. If we have wasted our life in sin and turn to the right, we have nothing to count for us only from the moment we accepted God. Oh, go back now to the parting of the ways, to the choice we passed in childhood. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

The way of life is unnatural. Therefore, to enter this requires a change. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). The faithful few, just the faithful few.

Lord, I have started to walk in the light
Shining upon me from Heaven so bright;
I'll take the way with the Lord's despised few;
I've started in Jesus, and I'm going through.

The way is full of conflicts, but Jesus goes before us. "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4).

Oh yes, the way is a fight, but happiness, abiding joy is ours. Spiritually, the flowers are always blooming and the scene is always bright. Our conscience is easy, and we are assured. Heaven is ours when earth is past. "They.. rest from their labors, and their works do follow them" (cf. Rev. 14:13).

"Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

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THE END OF THIS SERMON