

# “PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE CHURCH OF TODAY

That there has been a “**falling away**” from God’s plan is acknowledged by God’s true servants and wide-awake church leaders today. The “**falling away**” process has been gradual, a great deal like Lot’s backsliding whose first step in the wrong direction was leaving the company of Abraham, the father of faith. Later, we remember, he pitched his tent near Sodom and finally we find him living in that wicked city.

In the second and third chapters of Revelation we have the complete picture of the backslidden church. Not a pretty picture, but it is the testimony of Jesus, the true and faithful witness. Let us look at these seven churches and then compare conditions of today.

The *church of Ephesus* had lost its first love. No mention is made of any terrible crime or sin. No, to the contrary, our Lord commends this church for its good works and patience “**for my name’s sake**”; but in a sad tone adds, “**I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.**” Remember that this church had great interest, zeal, and plenty of good works, but the love for Christ was not the same as in the beginning. It had grown cold. When your feelings are gone, and coldness takes the place of a burning heart you are comforted with a cold ministry which satisfies you with the thought that “we live on faith, not feelings.”

Why are some people more interested in concerts and programs than in revival meetings? . . . The answer is easy; there has already been a “**falling away**” in the heart. When love has grown cold and a frigid atmosphere takes the place of a burning heart the first thing we do is to remove the boundary lines between the world and God. The result: we mix with the world.

As long as God’s people had a burning love for Christ the worldly people had no desire to mix with them. They were a “peculiar people,” but just as soon as they became “reasonable” and not too hot, the world began to join their company.

The second backsliding step we find in *the Pergamos church*, where the world has been let in and they have allowed the doctrine of the enemy to enter. In this state you are not satisfied with *manna from heaven*. Your desires and appetites are for the *fleshpots of Egypt*, with its garlic and onions. Revival meetings, Bible study, testimony, and praise services have lost their attraction.

Now something must take the place of a Biblical program and the substitutions consist of rummage sales, oyster suppers, socials and “catchy” programs. And here we have the up-to-date picture of the modernistic church.

The backsliding continues and we find that in *the Thyatira church* the world rules (Revelation 2:20). In this state we are ready to appoint and be satisfied with worldly church leaders. Now those with oratorical gifts, money-power and good standing in the courts of the world take the place of men with old-fashioned faith and spiritual power. Under this new order false teachers will be welcomed with open arms, for **“the time has come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables”** (II Timothy 4:3-4).

“Away with old-fashioned revivals; what we need today is ‘Streamlined Revival’—what we need is a new-thought evolution and not a spiritual revolution—No need to go to God with your burden, tell it to some friend or confess it to some group. The blood of Christ is too vulgar in our day and age and belongs to a slaughterhouse religion; you can ease your mind and guilty conscience by taking a stand for higher and loftier ideals.”

The final step in this sad state of affairs we have in *the Laodicean church*, a picture of the apostate church. **“I am rich, and increased in goods and have need of nothing,”** but the True and Faithful Witness says that you are **“poor, blind, naked.”**

The Laodicean spirit prevails all over our land today and it is a sad spectacle to see churches that were once a great testimony for God and real soul-saving stations but which today are spiritually bankrupt.

“Why should we wake up? Nothing wrong with us,” is the monotone from their altars. “We don’t want pessimistic preachers with repentance messages.”

When this condition has stopped the churches we find that beautiful orations take the place of blood and fire preaching, classic choir anthems are substituted for songs of the cross, and entertainment programs and festivals crowd out the prayer and praise services. “Dad” Hall, the old-fashioned Episcopalian preacher uttered a great truth when he said, “The first church waited upon God in the upper room while the twentieth century church waits upon the tables in the supper room.”

That old warrior and mighty soldier of the cross, General Wm. Booth, said there were five great dangers that will confront the twentieth century church and he mentioned them in this order:

- (1). Religion without the Holy Spirit
- (2). Christianity without Christ
- (3). Forgiveness without regeneration
- (4). Morality without God
- (5). Heaven without hell.

It is indeed pitiful to watch the “works” and “efforts” of an apostate church and how a backslidden group which has lost power with God will make a sorrowful attempt to put their machinery in motion. Organization? Yes, indeed, but a mechanism with squeaky wheels—a manmade system that functions for selfish interest to glorify man and not to the honor of God. In other words: it becomes a “movement” that doesn’t “move” anything.

Let me give you some examples.

God gave us a glorious revival in a certain town. People crowded the church night after night. A real awakening came to the church and it received a new inspiration to go on for God. A nearby church decided that they also would try something along the same line in order to get new interest and more members, so they called on one of their denominational leaders to come for a series of meetings.

Here is the printed preliminary announcement of the coming meetings:

“A series of preparatory meetings to the evangelistic campaign to be conducted at the First . . . Church early in January by Dr. . . . will begin Wednesday evening. A penny supper sponsored by the Women’s Society will be served at 6:30 followed by a devotional service directed by the Men’s Brotherhood class. Guild Girls will hold a candy sale later” . . . (It was amusing to note the “devotions” by the Brotherhood class, who opposed our meetings by assisting the pastor in putting on a “drama” on Sunday nights).

In closing this chapter let me give you a true-to-life picture of a backslidden church:

I happened to be in a certain town where I was a stranger and my errand kept me there over Sunday night. I decided to visit some church and worship with God’s people. I thought it would be interesting to come to some church where no one knew me and I could sit unnoticed in the audience. I passed by many churches but chose a large beautiful church building that represented the old-time Gospel.

I slipped quietly into one of the rear pews where I was well hidden behind a rather plump lady in a heavy fur coat, and there was another large mink coat at my right. It was a beautiful large auditorium seating about a thousand people, with about one hundred and fifty in attendance. The program handed me stated that it was a forty-five minute service with a twelve-minute sermon.

The robed choir sang a number of anthems very well and in a worshipful manner; the organist knew how to bring forth sweet melodies from the large pipe-organ. After lengthy and dry announcements the ushers walked forward in true military fashion, bedecked in cut-away coats with striped trousers, to receive the evening offering, after which the congregation arose and sang “Gloria Patria.” It was beautiful and impressive.

The pastor arose and read his text which was from Romans twelve. Here, I thought, we shall have an old fashioned “altar-rail sermon.” But what a disappointment! “Years ago,” he said, “we did not understand this text, but we have built gymnasiums in connection with our churches so our young people can present their bodies a living sacrifice . . .”

While he was speaking the woman in the heavy fur coat in front of me fell asleep, and the lady at my side was busy reading the song book.

While the choir sang the Doxology the pastor left the platform and walked to the steps leading to the exit, and for a moment I thought maybe he would go and talk to people about God, but as we were leaving I noticed him standing at the steps shaking hands with the people as they passed by. I studied this act closely and noticed that they usually thanked the pastor for his sermon.

I became rather curious as to what those two women would say when it came their turn to pass by the pastor and take his hand, so I followed in line. Here came the sister who was busy reading the song book while he preached. Surely she could not thank him for a sermon she had not listened to, but behold, she took his hand and so sweetly said: "Thank you, pastor, for that beautiful sermon."

Well, she got by all right but how about that plump lady in the heavy fur coat who slept during his sermonette? I felt rather sorry for her, but with her white-gloved hand she took his and smiled so sweetly as she looked him in the eye and exclaimed, "I enjoyed your sermon immensely, Pastor."

Early next morning I was standing on the station platform awaiting the train that would bring me back to Chicago when I noticed this pastor pacing up and down the platform, also bound for Chicago. I followed him into the coach, and, unnoticed, took my place alongside of him as I courteously asked if I might share the seat with him.

After removing my coat and hat I told him of my habit of asking those I ride with if they were saved.

"I'm a preacher, my friend," was his reply.

"I did not ask what your profession was; I asked if you were saved, a born-again Christian," I added.

"Can a man be a preacher and not be a Christian?" was his next question.

"Yes," I replied, "because two preachers have been saved in my meetings."

"Who are you, if I may ask?" he curiously inquired. I handed him my card.

"You don't mean to tell me you are head of the great noon-day meetings in Chicago?" . . .

And when I explained my connection with that God-blessed ministry he said how much this broadcast had meant to him and how happy he was to meet the man whom he had heard so many times over the air.

"And were you in town last night?" I told him that an errand had brought me there.

“Oh, how I wish I had known it, because it would have been such a happy pleasure to have you in our church. You see I have the biggest congregation in town, more than two thousand members and a church seating more than two thousand and last night I had nearly a packed church and an old-time meeting and I know you would have enjoyed it . . . Oh, how I wish you had been there.

I looked him squarely in the face and said, “I was.”

He was stunned for a minute and then changed the subject.

A church that has left God’s blueprint is a sorry spectacle and a laughing stock to the world. It not only has lost contact with heaven but has lost the respect of the community. It reminds me what an old judge said to a crowded court room when I stood before him charged with exceeding the speed limit of twenty-five miles an hour. When I tried to plead my case by saying I was sure I wasn’t speeding, he said: “I suppose you were in a hurry to go to some road-house for a great night of carousing.”

“No, your honor,” I answered very meekly, “I had my family in the car and we were going to a prayer meeting” . . .

This stunned him and he sat up in his chair, put his glasses on his forehead as he looked over a crowded courtroom of similar victims and exclaimed: “This man is discharged. I never heard of anyone being in a hurry to go to a prayer meeting.”

**~ end of chapter 13 ~**

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