

GOOD NEWS

A Collection of Sermons

by

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First Series

A Second Series, under the title "*Joyful Tidings*," will soon be issued.

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SERMON THREE

A LIVING SACRIFICE

(Morning service at Chicago Avenue Church)

We invite your attention for a few minutes — for I purpose not to talk longer than thirty minutes at these morning services — to a consideration of the following verses in Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

This verse, wisely understood, will adjust the soul rightly toward its God.

The next verse: **"And be ye not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."**

This verse, properly studied and wisely understood, will adjust a man rightly toward this world.

And now the next verse: **"For I say through the grace given unto Me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."**

This will bring a man to a good understanding with himself. I have to do with myself. I have to do with the world around me. I have to do with God. And if a man ought to come to a good understanding with his Maker, he ought to come to a good understanding with the world. And then he ought to come to a good understanding with himself. Nine tenths of all the trouble in the world is because men don't have a good understanding with themselves to start with. All the trouble you have ever had with labor and servants and hirelings has in the main arisen at this point, that you didn't have a good understanding with yourself to start with.

The first verse. **"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."**

The first duty of every man in this world is to adjust himself rightly toward God — to get in harmony with God — and after all, brethren, that man is the most religious who is the most in harmony with God. I won't say that a man is the most religious who is most

IN HARMONY WITH CREEDS

For though Christ did many wonderful works. He left the construction of creeds to those who would lead a less busy life than His. It isn't to have faith in creeds, but to believe on and follow Christ — to put your foot in every track Christ made — that's faith.

“I beseech you, brethren, that ye give yourself;” soul and body, for time and for eternity, to God.

Really, brethren, God can make me good — not so much by what He gives me as by what He takes from me. Michael Angelo once saw a large marble slab by the roadside; he stopped, and, after looking upon it intently for a while, he got out his mallet and chisel and went to work on it.

People said to him, “What are you going to do?” and he said, “I see an angel in this slab of marble,” and he went on hewing and cutting away — hewing and cutting away, he didn't add anything in the world to it; but when he had finished the taking process there was an angel sure enough; and if God had breathed the breath of life into it, it might have taken its place around the throne in heaven.

This utter nonsense of always getting something from the Lord and never giving anything back looks like a man always taking from his farm and never putting anything on it. You want to know where that man is going to end; the buzzards will get his stock, and the sheriff will get his farm. That's the sort of way that farmer will wind up.

I am heartily out of all patience with this world's waiting for God to continually be doing something for it. Now, brethren, it's your time to be doing and my time to be doing. What more could God have done than He has done for me — and then what have I done for myself and for God? That's the question — that's it. Christ said, **“It is finished.”** All you have to do is to put yourself in a line with God. Then, indeed, you will

FULFIL THE MISSION

Upon which God has projected you in this life.

The first thing you must do is to manage to get in harmony with God.

If you can do that best by crying, cry; if you can do it best by mourning, mourn; if by laughter, then laugh; or if by praying, pray. I won't prescribe the method by which you should get into harmony with God; but if the method you have been trying has proved a failure, then try something else — anything but the line you've been running on and failed. Go and give yourself to God just like you are. Get in harmony with yourself and with your God.

It's the hardest work a man ever undertook in this world, giving himself to God just like he is; but you just give yourself to God as you are, and God will make you what you ought to be.

It is not, Lord, what wilt Thou have me believe? But, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? We always want to patch up and fix something first, and do a thousand things for ourselves — God wants you as you are.

I have often thought of an incident where a moral young man asked in the presence of his servant, who had been converted, "How is God willing to save a Negro in an hour, while I have been praying for years?"

The Negro said: "Boss, when the Lord God came down to me, I saw I was ragged and dirty, and I couldn't 'shuck' off these ragged, dirty garments, but now the Lord clothes me in garments of righteousness and purity. But," said he, "boss, you have been moral all your life, and you've only had a little greasy spot on your coat, and you are trying and trying to 'shuck' it off before you go to the Lord: but if you go to Him He'll put a new one on you for you to wear in heaven and rejoice."

The trouble is you want to do a great deal, but it's

ON THE WRONG LINE

Now, brethren, first give yourself. The Lord says you are His; say to Him, "**Now, Lord, speak, thy servant heareth.**" The most startling question in all this universe for souls is this: "**Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?**" — not what you are to believe — not what you are to think or what you are to read, but, "**What wilt Thou have me to do?**" A man gets into harmony with God by effort and movement. You can't think yourself into harmony with God — of course I think all intelligent action is based on intelligent thought.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, present your bodies as a living sacrifice."

The first thing you are to do is to give yourself wholly and entirely to God as you are. "**Here I am, Lord.**" That means I belong to God, exclusive of everything in the world; that is to be in complete harmony with God. This word "consecration" covers the ground. "Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord."

We have different ways of consecrating ourselves, and I have been disgusted in different places when I hear pastors or evangelists say to the people, "All you've got to do is to consecrate yourself to God. Just come up and consecrate yourself to God."

They come along up, and afterward you stop one of those who went up and ask him:

"What did you come up for?" "I dunno; just come to consecrate myself."

“What do you mean by consecrating yourself?” “I dunno. Just consecrated; that’s all I know.”

Consecrate! I see a man walking up to a table, and he has on a plate

A BEAUTIFUL CAKE

And a knife in his hand, and he says, “Lord, I am going to consecrate this cake to Thee, and in testimony thereof I cut Thee a little of this brown and burned edge off the ‘fur’ side.” That’s just the way we run our consecration nowadays. But what do you mean by consecration? I bring a cake up to the table, stick the knife deep into it, and say, “My God! there is the cake, and there is the knife; cut where and what you please, and if you want it all, take it. I am not worthy of it.”

Now you put yourself in an attitude where God can take you up into the arms of His love and mercy. The fact is, the sweetest meat the old Jew ever ate came from the altar of God. When he took it home he said it was the sweetest morsel he had ever tasted. It came from God’s altar. God just wants you to give up the things that you have long enough to sweeten them and make them glorious, and then give them all back to you.

“Consecrate me now” — give yourself to God. I am ready to say here in my place that no amount of training, Sunday-school teaching, mother’s love, or Holy Ghost power ever made any man religious. If these things made a man religious, everybody in Chicago would be religious today. You’ve heard preaching, had Sunday-school training, had mother’s love and influence, and the power of the Holy Spirit has ever been willing; but is that all? It is man who walks out and says,

DEEP DOWN IN HIS SOUL

“I will be religious.”

Now you have got started, and God will do something to help you; but God Himself is powerless to do anything for a man that has not decided for himself to be religious. God Himself can never help a man until that man decides to be religious. Can He? If He can, how can He? A man wants to make a farmer out of his boy; he buys him land, stock, and implements.

But if that boy is lying around barrooms, and won’t consent to become a farmer, and won’t farm, that’s making a farmer of him with a vengeance, now, ain’t it?

Now what are you going to do? God wants to get you where you will decide to be religious — going to be religious, God helping me. I decide to be religious. Now you open the way for yourself, for the facilities are all forthcoming. Present your bodies a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice. I tell you, brother, I will be religious, and religious on God’s plan, too.

Come to a good understanding with your Maker. We go about, nine tenths of us, singing, “Surely the Captain may depend on me.” Yes. He may surely depend on you — for what, though? Singing? And it’s less religious to sing than to do anything else under God’s kingdom; and yet I think singing is a grand part of sacred service.

I read a little incident the other night where a mother was told of a poor woman in

DISTRESS AND SUFFERING

For the necessities of life. When this mother told of this poor woman at her home, one of the children spoke up and said, "Mother, we must try and help them."

Said the mother: "Are you willing, daughter, to give up sugar in your tea in order that we may help them?"

Said the child: "I'd like to help them, but you know tea is mighty mean without sugar in it."

Then the mother said: "All you children go into the garden and think over it an hour as to what you are willing to give up for that poor family."

And I reckon they thought an hour about it, and they came back and said: "Mother, we are perfectly willing to give up our lessons in order to help these poor people."

That's just the attitude that there is in the world: "I'll give up prayer-meeting; I'm perfectly willing to give up Sunday-school; I'll give up preaching for Christ. Oh yes, I'll just give these up. I ain't particular about them anyhow."

But, brother, who is the man that will say, "I give myself to Christ, to God, with all that I am"?

That's consecration, nothing more nor less. That's the beginning and the end of a religious life, consecration to God. Then "**Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**"

I want to live in such an atmosphere of a religious life that this world won't bother or trouble me. I can live here in Chicago

A HUNDRED YEARS

if God is as good to me here as He is in Georgia, and I never would get an invitation to a card party; I never would be asked to take part in a charity ball. God helping me, I'll never fall so low in my religious life as to be invited to these things. I never have; and I have crossed some of the swiftest rivers on some very narrow logs. I say we will never be religious until we give this old world to understand some things. I never have gone to these things since I have been religious. This old world knows who it fools with.

Now, if that's your style, I don't fight you; I just say, "Poor thing, what are you doing? I am very sorry for you, not mad. I wouldn't say a word to hurt you, poor little fellow! I'll let the devil do that later.

In my heart of hearts, I tell you, instead of being happy and living like you should, glorifying God and being a blessing to the world, here you are groveling away down, and this old world will never let you be religious until you let this old world understand that 'I am going to consecrate myself to God.'"

A prominent sporting man in Louisville went and joined the church. The next day he walked the streets and met his former sporting friends. Said he:

"Now here, boys, I gave myself to God yesterday, and you need never ask me to drink, or to

THROW ANOTHER CARD

Or to go to horse-races, for I'm not going. Boys, here: good-by; if you don't intend to live right, then we'll have to part."

Like Paul, I'll lay aside everything that cumpers me. If it's my coat, I'll take it off; if it's my hat, off it goes; if it's my shoes, off they go; and I'll run this race if I have to go into heaven barefoot and bareheaded. I tell you heaven is just where you get out of breath on that line.

This world has a contempt for these things, and you know it. I sustained the relation of a sinner towards God for twenty-four years of my life. I never saw a member of the church at card tables and other such places that I didn't feel an instinctive contempt for him.

I will never get that low down, for card playing is the game of starvelings, mentally and spiritually. Go out here to this asylum and you'll see in nearly every room in it a pack of cards — they amuse idiots with cards; it's the amusement of idiots in asylums.

Yes, idiots are in the majority in this country, but that don't make it right to be so; I want that to be understood.

"Be not conformed . . . but be ye transformed." Get right and in harmony with God and out of harmony with all that's bad; that's what this verse means.

Then, brethren, let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Get a wise estimate of his mental faculties. Get a wise and proper estimate of yourself. About three fourths of the Christians are singing this: "Oh, to be nothing, nothing!" And they have sung it until it's the God's truth — they are nothing, not a thing, just blanks in God's moral universe.

I don't want to be nothing. I want to be something and somebody, and when I die I not only want the songs and prayers and blessings of men, but a half of the angels in heaven, looking over the parapets, ready to bear me away to God.

"Oh, to be nothing!" Brother, you ought to have your name changed, and let us call you Old Brother Nothing and Old Sister Nothing."

The Lord have mercy upon us, and give us a wise estimate of what we are.

May God help us to take hold of some of these thoughts, and reach a higher and a

NOBLER STATE OF LIFE

We have had sentiment enough; let us now run our life on the ethics and morals, practically telling the truth, paying our debts, being good husbands and wives.

I have talked a half-hour, and I reckon these reporters are glad I am going to stop. I sympathize with you. There is no set of men like you. I love you, boys. I feel at home with you in my room and elsewhere. God bless all you reporters in this city, and as they are reporting me in these sermons, I pray God that the good in them may be impressed in the hearts and minds of these reporters. I preach at the rink to-night, and I want your prayers and sympathy; I need them.

At the conclusion of the services many persons crowded on the platform to shake the hands of the evangelist. Almost the first to approach him and extend his hands was Professor Swing, who introduced his daughter to Mr. Jones. Shaking his hand, Professor Swing congratulated Mr. Jones upon his solid reasoning and pointed manner, and he trusted that a great deal of good would be the outgrowth of this meeting.

~ end of sermon 3 ~

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