

“PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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CHAPTER THREE

STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN THE NOON-DAY MEETINGS

Strange happenings in Chicago's great noon-day meetings would fill a book. Naturally such outstanding gospel services as conducted during the past seven years by The Christian Business Men's Committee in Chicago's great loop district, which have attracted world-wide attention, have resulted in some strange conversions and unusual episodes. Each member of this committee could relate some outstanding incident, and everyone of these mighty men of the Gospel who have sacrificed of their time and unselfishly given their best as they preached from the various downtown theaters could write books on what their eyes have seen and their ears heard in these noonday gospel meetings.

Let me just give you briefly three "strange happenings" that I consider most unusual.

A well-to-do business official lost his position when his firm went down in the crash a few years ago. His entire investment was wiped out. Discouraged, broken-hearted, and in despair, he decided to end it all. He loved his family and did not want them to suffer. To them he was worth more dead than alive, he argued. "My insurance policy is paid up and when I'm dead that will take care of my darling wife and the kiddies." So he planned carefully, and one day while his wife and children were downtown he took his gun from the bureau drawer, took his place before the mirror, placed the gun to his head and was about to pull the trigger when he hesitated, thinking of the neighbors who would hear the shot, and probably hurry in and rush him to a hospital so that his life would be spared. So he decided to turn on the radio full force so no one could hear the shot.

This being done he again took his position at the mirror to be certain of his aim, and then again placed the gun to his head and was about to pull the trigger when he heard coming over the radio, "You have tried everything and failed, now try Jesus."

He seemed stunned for a moment, but laid down the gun while he listened some more. "That's the strangest thing I ever heard," he said to himself. He heard the announcement at the close, "Come to the Grand Opera House tomorrow noon and we'll tell you the story that never grows old."

The next day he was there.

Again he heard of Jesus who is mighty to save, who stilled the tempest and speaks peace to those who are on the stormy sea of life. He lifted his hand when the invitation was given and came to the front and accepted Christ as his own personal Savior. Heavenly light dispelled the gloom, and brought heaven's joy into a sin-sick heart, and with gladness he told the story of redeeming grace, and with a newness of life he walks and talks with Jesus.

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Here is another —

I stood at the front of the platform while the speaker gave the invitation at the close of his message (as is the custom of the various men of the committee) when I especially noticed a tall middle-aged man in the second row in front of me who gave me the impression that he was sad as he stood there with bowed head and unsuccessfully tried to keep the tears from falling. I walked up to his side and whispered, "Let's you and I spend a moment in prayer." With this he followed me to the front seat and we knelt down. It didn't take an unusual amount of ordinary intelligence to note that here was an unusually refined and educated man with a heavy heart, on the brink of some great calamity, so I told him that Christ was the answer to all of life's perplexing problems.

"My friend," I continued, "Jesus said, '**Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.**'" Then I added the words, so fitting for those who are tired of sin and what this world has to offer, "**'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out'.**"

"Will you come?"

And he came.

After he had made public confession of his faith in Christ, he took me aside and said, "Were you the one that laid your hand on my shoulder?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Well," he said, "when you did that, you not only saved a soul but you saved a life. I'm a broker on LaSalle Street. When the crash came I was completely wiped out. Everything became black as night. Fortunately my insurance was in force and I wanted to protect my wife. I would at least be worth something to them if I died, but living I was only a burden. So I decided to end it all by jumping into the river at the Clark Street Bridge. In order to make it doubly sure I went to my friend in the drugstore and asked for some poison to kill a dog, and I told him no lie, as I felt no better than a dog. My plan was to swallow the poison and then jump in. Then I started up Clark Street and when I passed this theater I heard a man on the sidewalk say, 'Come on in, all seats free today.' So I decided to see one more show, as long as it was free, before saying good-bye to this cruel world. I selected the highest priced seat at the front, and to my surprise I heard of Christ who came to seek and to save that which was lost."

He handed me the package of poison and went out praising the Lord.

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Here is one a little different, but it tells a unique story. The first to respond to the invitation this noon were four ladies. Three of our appointed personal workers were immediately at their side but there was no one to deal with the fourth lady. Because of our rule that ladies deal with ladies and men with men only, I looked around to see whether there might be someone near that I could motion to, but strangely enough this noon I recognized no one. To my right, in the sixth or seventh row, I noticed an elderly lady with grey hair who appeared saintly, so I went up to her and asked if she was a Christian and when she smiled in the affirmative, I asked if she would go to the front and deal with the young lady at the end of the front row who wanted to be saved.

“I can’t, because I have a luncheon engagement,” was her reply.

There was no time for argument so I went up the aisle in the hope of finding someone whom I knew, and in the middle section towards the rear I noticed two sisters, both of whom I had known for years; so I asked one of them to come with me quickly and lead a soul to Christ, and to my surprise she answered: “I don’t know how.” Then turning to the other one I received the very same answer, “I don’t know either.”

So I went down the other aisle and from the front I looked over the audience in the hope of finding some Salvation Army lady or missionary who usually frequents these meetings, but none was in sight. On the left stood a tall slender lady, dressed a great deal like the Quakers or Mennonites, minus the bonnet, and as I came near her I saw in her hand a Testament and in her eyes tears, but her face bore evidence of the heartfelt joy in seeing so many come forward to accept Christ.

“You are happy in, the Lord?” was my question, and with a smile she nodded. I was now desperate, so I added this question, “Do you know how to bring a soul to Christ?”

“Yes, I know how in Norwegian but not in English,” was her quick reply.

“Bless your heart, sister, it works the same way. Will you try it?” And with that I led her to the side of the young lady.

At the close of the meeting I stood as usual in the lobby of the theater, meeting friends as they walked out. To my side came those two sisters and they informed me that I should never ask them again.

“But, you are Sunday-school teachers, and as such should know how to bring souls to a saving knowledge of Christ,” I remarked, and added that I thought I had done them a favor by giving them the opportunity of experiencing the greatest blessing this side of heaven.

A few minutes later the elderly lady came, and as she walked out she turned to me and said, "Were you the one that asked me to pray with that lady seeking salvation?"

"Yes, I'm the one, but didn't you have a luncheon engagement?"

"Yes," she said, "but I was tormented with the thought that I had more interest in a luncheon than in winning a soul for Christ after being a Christian for more than forty years, so I went to the front myself and had a meeting with God, and I just stopped to tell you that now I am ready for business for God."

I was sort of worrying about my Norwegian friend, wondering how she had succeeded in her first attempt in English. I did want to talk with her and hoped that she had not passed through with the crowd unnoticed. Nearly everyone had left when through the door came this lady with her arm around this new-found friend, and as her eyes sparkled through tears of gladness she turned to me and said: "Brother, this young lady has just found Christ and she wants to tell you how happy she is after the sin-burden rolled away."

I took my young sister by the hand and gave her a Bible verse, and then with a tender voice mingled with tears which she wiped with a tear-soaked handkerchief, said: "Jesus is real to me." Then together we thanked God for this new child born into the family of God.

"But, sister, you must tell me how it went, seeing this was the first time you have tried it in the English language."

"Oh," she said, "it went just as well in English as in Norwegian."

You see, my friend, in the soul-winning business the "language question" is of less importance than the "heart question."

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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