

GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

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SERMON FIFTEEN

IT PAYS TO BE RIGHTEOUS

We invite your attention to-night to the last clause of the tenth verse of the second chapter of the Gospel by John.

Really the text is this:

“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

But we take this text to-night because it is illustrative of the principle we want to discuss:

“But thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

I want to say to you before I proceed that I feel less like preaching to-night and more like talking. I feel like I wanted to talk to each man and woman just as if we were sitting in our parlor or sitting in your family room face to face. Let us talk about this, and you talk back at me with your mind and let us see where we will get to to-night in this discussion.

There are two questions that always come up naturally and legitimately, and, you might say, inevitably, between employer and employee. There can be no such thing as a contract for labor without the asking and answering of two questions. Now, if you seek to employ a man for a day or a year or an hour, the first natural and inevitable question on his part will be: What kind of work do you want me to do? And when this question is satisfactorily answered, there is another just as inevitable and natural, and that is; what will you pay me for it? We say these two questions are at the very basis of all contracts for labor. There can be no intelligent agreement without, 1, the question, what kind of work do you want me to do and, 2, what will you pay me for it?

WHOSE SERVANT AM I?

Now, there are persons here to-night who may boast of the fact: “I never was in the employment of any one; I never sustained the relationship of a hired servant.” They boast of the fact that they live under the freest government the world ever saw, whose very constitution guarantees to every man his life, and his liberty and his property.

And yet there is a very special sense in which we are all servants, and there is a very special sense in which we are employed, and there is an awful sense in which pay-day is coming.

Now, whose servant am I? In a spiritual, sense every man is a servant He has his master and his employment and pay-day is coming to him. Now, whose servant am I!

We may settle that very easily and in a very short time. Our Saviour said:

“To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are, whether of sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness.”

He said again:

“No man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will despise the one and cling to the other.”

He said something a little stronger than that:

“He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

The dividing line is so narrow that no man can stand on that line. I am either on one side or the other. There are a great many men here to-night, though, that will tell you, you go to them with a question like this:

“Are you a bad man?” “No sir.”

“Are you a good man?” “No sir.”

A MIXED LOT

Neither good nor bad. There are a great many of this sort in the world. Really, they are in the majority.

Well, now let me tell you. There are two characters in every community that ever I have been in, that are a puzzle to half the community.

One character is that member of the church that will pray in public and pray in his family, and do anything the church wants him to do, and pay liberally, but he don't treat his fellow-man right; won't pay his debts; won't live right toward his fellow-man. He seems to do everything that God wants him to do and to do right toward God, but he don't treat his neighbor right.

Well, now, here's the other one, standing right by his side. He's a just man and pays his debts; he is generous to the poor; he seems to be, all in all, a good citizen. Well, now, there the two stand, and the balance of the community, a large proportion of the community, stand and look at these two characters, and say:

“Well, I’d rather be that man out of the church, that’s just and generous and pays his debts, than to be that man in the church that mistreats his neighbors.”

Well, why do you want to be a fool and be like either one? I don’t. I assure you, and by the grace of God I don’t intend to be like either one. I am going to do right toward God, and I’m going to do right toward man, and there’s the whole man.

“And this is the first and greatest of the commandments: Thou shalt serve God with all thy heart and mind and strength. And the other is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

And no man who is an enemy to his neighbor is a true friend to God. And no man who is an enemy of God can be a true friend to his neighbor. A half man! A half man! He will do right toward his neighbor. He won’t do right toward God. He will do right toward God, but won’t do right toward his neighbor.

Now, my friend, I say, in all love and kindness, if you are of these, I don’t want to be like you, I don’t care which character you represent; and God helping me, I want to do right toward God, and I want to do right toward my fellow-men. And after all, these men, neither good nor bad, you ask then: “Will you go to Heaven if you die?”

“No, sir; I hardly think I will.”

“Go to Hell?”

“No, sir; don’t think I’ll go to Hell.”

And your sort will necessitate some sort of third universe or world in eternity. You are not fit for Heaven; you admit it, and you are hardly bad enough to go to Hell. And here you are, and you have been to God and to this community, all your life, in just such an attitude as that:

NO NEUTRAL GROUND

Brother, let me say this to you, you are on one side or the other. I recollect once at a county camp-meeting a gentleman approached me and he said:

“I’m mighty glad to see this grand work going on here. I hope this whole community will be saved.”

“Well,” says I, “thank you, brother. What church do you belong to?”

He said: “I don’t belong to the church, but,” he says, “I’m a Christian.”

I said: “You a Christian and not belong to any church? Why, you are the man I’ve been looking for, too, these many years. I’ve offered a reward — a large reward — for one of your sort.

Christians are sort of scarce in the church, and the Lord knows I didn't know there was one out of the church. I'm gone lost, now. I've found an anomaly in the moral universe of God — a Christian out of the church!"

And I said to him: "I am mighty glad to meet you, sir. Now," said I, "this afternoon when I call up the penitents, I want to call on you to pray for them."

"Oh, no!" he says, "I can't pray in public."

Says I, "Why?" Said he, "Because I'm not a member of the church."

"Well" said I, "when the service is over this afternoon, take one of the boys — one of the penitent out from the altar — and go out into the woods and pray with him."

"Oh, no!" he says, "I can't do that." "Why?" said I.

"Because I am not a member of the church, Mr. Jones."

"Well," said I, "can't you just take one of the boys by the arm and take him off out into the woods and talk with him about Christ?"

"No!" he said, "my trouble is, I'm not a member of the church."

"No, sir," said I, "That ain't your trouble. Your trouble is, you belong to the devil from your hat to your heels! That's your trouble."

"He that is not with me is against me."

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

SETTLING THE QUESTION

There is no neutral ground, sir. Every Christian man has his banner and his weapon, and he is out in the front ranks, and he is fighting for Christ and for his cause. Now, whose servant am I?

"To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are."

Well, now, let's settle this question, each one for himself.

The Lord Jesus Christ said this: **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."**

Do you do that? "No sir."

He said again: **"Come out from among them and be ye separate."**

Have you done that? “No sir.”

“Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.”

Have you done that? “No sir.”

Well, that settles the question beyond all cavil that you are not a servant of the Lord God, and then, if you are not a servant of the Lord God Almighty, there is but one alternative you have: You are a servant of the devil. Every man that walks this earth is a loving, willing, cheerful servant of God, or he is a servant of the devil— one or the other.

Now, will you slip up to your master, the devil, and ask him what kind of work he wants you to do? Ah me! That seems like a foolish proposition! What kind of work does the devil want his servants to do! He wants them to profane the name of God; to violate the Sabbath; to bear false witness; to do a thousand things that we are guilty of every day.

He wants me to do those things that will make my wife think less of me and make my children think less of me and make my parents think less of me. He wants me to do those things that are disreputable and that dishonor God and that will doom my soul forever. Isn't that so? I can prove it by fifty thousand sinners in St. Louis that that is true.

THIS DEVIL'S WAGES

Then, if I must do such disreputable work as this, and if I must engage in such disreputable employment as that, what is the wages? Woe and misery and anguish on earth and damnation in the end. Is that so? Well, there are thousands of sinners living and thousands in eternity to-night that are living witnesses to the truth that the devil would ruin them upon earth and degrade them in time and damn them in eternity. Pay-day is coming. It has come to millions. It is now coming to thousands. What's the wages!

Preaching once in my own church on a line of thought like this, I turned to an old gray-headed sinner sitting over to my left. Said I: “There you are, after sixty odd years of age, and I wish you would get up and tell this congregation your wages for sixty-five years of sinful bondage.”

The old man twisted and turned in his pew, and next day he met me on the road and said he:

“Oh, Jones, when you put that question to me last night, if I had stood up and told the plain truth it would have frightened many a soul last night. I can tell you, sir, that for sixty-five years of sinful bondage, all I have to show for it in the world is the most godless family in all this settlement, and a hard heart, and a stiff neck, and a rebellious soul, and no assurance at all that I will ever be saved.”

Oh, sir, when a man of sixty-five years of age reaches a point where his stock in trade is all things like that, it is enough to frighten a man who has not gone farther than some of you boys. Then, if I be a servant of the Lord God — and thank God he has many servants in the city — the question comes up:

What does the Lord God want his servants to do!

- He wants me to love mercy and to do justly and walk humbly before God.
- He wants me to bear the fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness and faith.
- He wants me to work diligently and work righteousness and speak the truth in my heart.
- He wants me to do those things that will make my wife think more of me, and that will make my neighbor think more of me, and make my children think more of me.
- He wants me to do those things that will honor me in time and elevate my soul every day, and ultimately bring me to the saint's everlasting rest, in a world of bliss and:

A DELIGHTFUL SERVICE

Now, brother, if this is true, the Lord wants us to serve him gladly and serve him joyfully, and therein is nothing that the Lord wants me to do that I won't be in doing it, a better merchant, a better farmer, a better lawyer, a better doctor, a better mechanic, a better everything and anything, for religion is the best thing on earth to mix with life, and there is nothing better in Heaven than religion.

Now, there are some seemingly hard things we have to do for Christ, but I will honor him that this declaration is true as earth and Heaven ever listened to. Listen! I will honor my Saviour with this fact: I have done some seemingly hard things, but the hardest thing I ever did for Christ was the thing that made me most like him after I got through with it He that sweats and toils and suffers for Christ shall have flagons of joy and rivers of pleasure for every tear and pang he has ever had. Now, if it is such delightful service that I am to render in the employ of my God, what is the pay? What is the pay? Why, brother, he gives me enough cash to live on every day, and when I get old and wrinkled and gray-headed and cannot work any longer, God comes down and picks me up in his loving arms and carries me home to Heaven to live forever and ever.

WHY NOT SERVE GOD?

Is that true? It is as true as Heaven. Then I stop and ask myself this question: If these things are, and this world knows they are true, then what? Why is it that every man in the world is not a servant of God? Why is it that there is a servant of the devil in the universe? If the devil wants to employ me in disreputable service and degrading service, and it is misery and anguish in time and damnation in eternity, and God gives me delightful, joyous employment and helps me to build a character that will stand the test of judgment, and finally sits me down on the streets of the paradise of God — if one is true and the other is true, why is it that there is a servant of the devil in all this broad land? Now, let us see why.

“Thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

This text illustrates a principle in this moral universe on both sides of the question. The devil's economy is to give the best he has got first and then it gets worse through all eternity. Now, to illustrate — and I always could illustrate a thing faster and perhaps better than I could talk it:

THE PALACE OF SIN

Now, when I was a ten or twelve years old young boy, the devil took me up into a large, capacious palace.

A magnificent structure it was, beautiful, glorious in all its architectural beauty, he carried me into the palace and led me around, and I looked upon and worshiped the pictures hanging around the walls, and then I looked at the beautiful carpets on the floor; I looked at those beautiful windows, with their lace curtains. I looked again, and there was a table of pleasure, and a chair of ease, a sofa of contentment, and, oh, how many thousand things in that palace charmed my heart. And then he said to me: "If you will be my servant, all this is yours."

And I surveyed those pictures, and those beauties, and that elegant furniture, and that beautiful palace, inside and out, and I said: Well, sir, I enter your service. If all this is mine, what do I care for God and Heaven and everlasting life?" and I took possession. I remained in there, joyfully, several days. But I walked out one day, and when I returned I saw my chair of ease was gone, and, somehow or other, I never felt as easy. In there afterward as I did before. I returned another day and my sofa of contentment was gone, and, somehow or other, I never felt contented in there after that. I came back another day and my table of pleasure was gone, and somehow or other, the pleasures had departed with the table.

ILLUSIVE PLEASURES

I came back another day and one of those beautiful windows had been removed and a solid wall placed in its stead, and I said: "It is not quite as light in here as it once was."

I came back another day — a beautiful picture was removed, and how blank that wall looked! Another day, and another piece of furniture gone. Back another day, and a window gone — perceptibly darker. Another day and a door had been removed, and I said:

"There are not as many ways of ingress and egress, now, as I once had."

And on and on and on, until by and by the last picture was gone, the last window had been removed, and, oh, how dark and gloomy was my home! And again, and again, and the carpets were all taken up, and how bare and cold that floor! And again, and again, and another door removed, until the last door had been removed, except one, and the windows were removed and everything gone, and, oh, how desolate! But fourteen years ago the latter part of August last, I walked out of that palace to see my father die, and I promised him I'd never go back any more.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH

I know a man that stayed there just a little longer than I did—my friend he was. He stayed there until the last piece of furniture was gone, and every window removed, and the doors all taken out and he said: "I can't get out of that large, capacious palace."

The walls were coming together every day, every hour, and on Thursday night, about one o'clock, as his wife stood by his bedside, the walls of that palace crushed together, and he admitted with his dying breath that **“the wages of sin is death!”**

My God! How many souls in St. Louis are encompassed in that palace to-night? How many in there, with doors all removed and windows taken out! And they will realize some of these days, as the walls crush together, that **“the wages of sin is death!”**

SIN PROMISES BEST AT FIRST

But how on the other side? This is but a picture of life, brethren. Life! Why, I can remember the first dram I ever drank. It made me feel manly. I thought, “Well, surely I have found the elixir of life, the grand panacea for all sad feelings.” But I drank, and drank, until I despised myself and loathed, and loathed, and loathed my very being, because I was a miserable drunkard.

I recollect the first oath I ever swore. I thought it sounded manly. But I cursed and swore until I was a black-mouthed villain, and I despised myself when I walked into the presence of a Christian gentleman.

Oh, my congregation, to-night! I tell you that sin has its richest, sweetest ingredient at the top of the cup, but as you go down, and down and down, the bitterest drink that a human being can swallow are the last dregs of the sinner's life. Oh, how painful! Some of you know that to be true.

The devil offers and gives the best first, and it gets worse and worse and worse through all eternity! And there is not a dinner, twenty-five years old, in this house, but what you will realize in eternity that you saw more real pleasure in a life of sin, up to twenty years of age, than all eternity had for you after that time.

A STORY OF BYRON

When Lord Byron, who drank of every cup that earth could give him, and who had all the ministers of earth to play around him at his bed, Lord Byron with an intellectual and a physical nature that could drive down into deepest depths and could soar into the highest, and whose wings when spread could touch either pole — and that poor man just before he died, sitting in his gay company, was meditative and moody, and they looked at him and said: “Byron, what are you thinking about so seriously?”

“Oh,” he said, “I was sitting here counting up the number of happy days I had in this world.”

And they said: “How many do you make it?”

“Oh,” he said, “I can count but eleven and I was sitting here now wondering if I would ever make up the dozen in this world of tears and pangs and sorrows.”

Oh, brother, he went to depths you know nothing of, and the heights you will never reach. Let me say to you to-night, you are reaching the point like the great prominent character in England who was sitting thinking in his study, and a friend said: "What are you thinking about?"

He said: "I was sitting here looking at my dog on the mat and wishing in my heart I were that dog lying there."

Oh, sir, there are depths to which humanity can go that we loathe ourselves and despise ourselves, and yet these things promise mighty nice in the beginning.

THE FIRST CUP THE BITTEREST

But how about the other side of the picture? The first thing the Lord gives to a man is the bitterest cup that he ever swallowed up to that hour — the cup of conviction — repentance. Oh, me! When David took this cup in his hand and drank it down he said:

"It is the wormwood and the gall."

And he said:

"It makes my knees to smite together, and the pains of hell got hold upon me. I found trouble and sorrow."

There is no experience in all the universe of God like the experience of the soul in the deepest hour of its spiritual anguish. And this cup that God presents — the cup of conviction— to the honest soul, oh, how it makes his knees smite together, and what wormwood and gall it is!

I can never forget the hours in my life when I turned this world a loose and had no God to take my hand. Oh, brother for nearly a week I was wading and wading through the deepest trials. I had turned loose all my sins, and I could not find the hand of God. I was reaching up, saying, "Father, take my hand I take my hand!" And on I went.

I felt like the veriest orphan in all the universe of God, and miserably I pressed my way along, the most miserable man in the world. Thank God for those, awful hours! They have been so awful to me that my footsteps shall never go back over that road. God, let me die before I shall ever cross that weary quagmire again in my human experience, poor and wretched and miserable!

THE GOOD WINS

That was the first cup. I drank it down. And oh, what anguish and misery of soul. The next cup God presented to my lips was the cup of justification, and I drank it down, and I said, "Well, surely God has kept the good wine until now." Oh, none but God can know how glorious the sinner feels when he hears the voice of God saying:

"Son, daughter, thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven!"

That is the second cup. And on, and on — I have had a thousand I think sometimes — but I want to tell you it is better! Better! Better! And as you swallow the cup down, ever and anon as you hand the cup back to the hand of God, he tells you, “and still there is more to follow.” And on, and on, and on!

Why, the first cup God presented to Paul, he was stricken down in the road and struck stone blind. For three days and nights he groped his way in darkness until he reached the house of Ananias, and when Ananias laid his hands upon him and the scales fell from his eyes and joy came into his soul.

I expect Paul thought, “Well, God has kept the good wine until now.” And a few months after that Paul was caught up into the third heaven and poised himself over the city of God and looked down on the towering spires and jasper walls and pearly gates and his ears were charmed with the songs of angels and the music of the redeemed. I expect as he looked down on that city of God that he said: **“Well, verily God has kept the good wine until now.”**

A LAST CUP

But by and by in his lonely prison at Rome God presented another cup and Paul took his pen again and wrote to Timothy:

“The time of my departure is at hand.”

He just took that great clod of a word which we call “death” and threw it on one side and he said:

“The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.”

But God stooped over the parapet of heaven and shook his crown in his face, and Paul said, “I will wear that to-morrow. I will sleep in this old dungeon to-night and eat a cold breakfast in the morning, but I will take dinner in Heaven to-morrow with God and the angels.” And if we had Paul down here to-night to conclude this service, and he would just tell us what good things God has in store for us, we would all leave here shouting the praises of God for the glorious hope of an immortal life beyond the skies. Oh, brother! Better and better and better through all eternity.

THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN

I have thought of a thousand things in reference to eternity. I have thought this way; I have laid down and dreamed of Heaven, and I have stood up and thought of Heaven and I have sat down and read of Heaven, and then I have sung of Heaven, and on I go; but, brethren, all the money I have got in the universe is in this bank, and if it don't break I am a millionaire. I have felt it many a time. All my calculations and all my interest is in that direction, and if at the final day God should say the impossible to me:

“Depart ye cursed into everlasting flames.”

I will turn my back and walk away from the gates of Heaven the worst disappointed man that God ever drove away from his presence. No sir. My calculations are all that way. But, having His Word on it and His precious unbreakable promises on it, the day will come when I step inside of the pearly gates and turn around and see God and angels, and precious mother and father and loved ones, brethren, I will just bury my face in my hands and say, "Sure enough, beyond all doubt or cavil, I am here, I am here."

And blessed be God, I just as fully expect to realize that I am in heaven as I realize to-night I am in St. Louis; in fact more so. I may be mistaken about being in St. Louis, it may be somewhere else; but when I get to Heaven, there is no place in the world like Heaven, and I will know I am there, sure enough.

SAM JONES TO THE DEVIL

When I was in Waco, Texas, I was stricken down by laborious work with malarial typhoid fever. I suffered day after day and day after day for fourteen long days. I saw the anxious care on the doctor's face, and on my wife's face, and one day the devil, almost in his visible presence, came into my room, and, slipping up to my bedside, said: "Now you have worked yourself to death. Now you are down with typho-malarial fever. Your system is reduced, and your nervous system is exhausted. You will never rally from your sickness; you have worked yourself to death."

I said to His Majesty: Now, you get out of here! You get out of here! If I had it all to do over again I would not strike a lick less. I do not care much whether I go to Heaven about this time next week. Do you think you can set me back with that sort of talk?"

Said I: "You can get out! You get out of here! If I have worked myself to death, glory be to God! I have worked myself to Heaven, and that is the grand consummation of it all."

About nine tenths of the reasons why I want to stay down here is not because I think so grandly of this old world, but I want to stay here until God gives me time to eliminate from me everything that ought to be eliminated before I go. As soon as God shall empty me of all worldliness, and all self and fill me with his presence, I am ready to go any time. I don't want to be forever what I am to-night I want to be eliminated of some things and take in some other things before I crystallize forever and shall be forever what I am.

A VISION OF PEACEFUL DEATH

Better! Better! Well, now I know what a servant of God will do for other folks, and we are all alike. I have been watching some things mighty close during the last few years. I was pastor of a church and in that church there was one of the most faithful, godly women I ever saw in my life. Her husband was wealthy, and she gave with a princely hand to the poor and to every good cause, and it was joy to her heart to do for the Master. And finally her time came to pass out of this world. I visited her in her last illness. She was dying of consumption, and had spent several winters in Florida. When I would go into her room and talk to her, she would frequently say, "I dread to die, not the results of death," she said, "but the agonies of death."

And I talked to her and encouraged her all I could. She said, “I am so frail, I am so weak I can scarcely lift my hands, and, oh! How can I grapple with physical death?”

The last time I visited her before she died she motioned to the company present to leave the room — I suppose she did, for they all got up and walked out at once and left me alone with her. Then she said:

A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN

“My pastor, I have some things of importance to say to you that I never want you to mention while I live, for the world makes light of such things, and what I say to you is a sacred to me as my own soul.” She said, “You know I told you when you were here last that I was afraid of the agonies of death; not of the beyond.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I replied.

“Well,” she says, “I am not now.”

“Well,” said I, “what brought about the change!”

She said, “Yesterday I was lying in my room there and I put my handkerchief over my face and I was thinking of Heaven, and,” she says, “all at once a scene just as natural as life presented itself. It seemed that I stood upon the moss-covered banks of a beautiful river, and the noiseless water was rolling gently by.” And she said, “All at once a little boat ran its prow out right at my feet, and the oarsman invited me into the boat; I stepped into the little boat and it moored off so noiselessly, and we disembarked on the other bank amid the shouts of the angels and the songs of the redeemed, and,” she said, “they carried me up a beautiful avenue to a palace, and we walked up to the door of the palace and the door stood ajar.”

She said, “They carried me into the palace, and I felt like a stranger in a strange place. They carried me up to the King and introduced me to him, and as soon as my eyes fell upon him, I saw and recognized immediately that it was the world’s Redeemer, my precious Saviour, and I was at home from that time on. Now,” she said, “I am not afraid to die.”

Just a few days afterwards, as her husband sat with her, she called him in a whisper. He went to her. She said: “Husband, I feel so delightfully strange; what do you think is the matter with me?”

He felt her hand and felt her arm to her body, and it was cold.

“Oh, precious wife,” he said, “you are dying.”

She raised her arms and clasped them around his neck, and said: “Oh, husband, if this is death, what a glorious thing to die.” And she fell back upon her pillow and never breathed another breath.

A JOYOUS REUNION

Just eleven days after that I was walking along by the hotel, and the husband of this good woman said: "Mr. Jones, my little Annie is very sick. I wish you would come and see her."

She was the only child of that man and the good sister that had died. As I walked into the room, there was little Annie, little ten-year-old Annie, sick with diphtheria. I walked in and took her hand, and said: "Sweet darling, are you suffering much?"

She said in a whisper: "Yes, sir; a good deal."

I said: "Darling, do you want me to talk to you?"

And she said: "Yes, air: if you please."

"What about?" I asked.

She said: "I want you to talk to me about Heaven."

I said: "Well, darling, it is a great country, a glorious place, where little girls never suffer, and mamma is never sick, and where all is life and health and peace."

And her little eyes would fairly dance like diamonds in her head while I talked. And directly the doctors walked in, and her father said: "Annie, darling, the doctors want to cauterize, to burn your throat again."

She looked up so pleadingly, and said: "Papa, please, sir, don't let them burn my throat any more. Mamma has been calling me all the morning and I want to go."

"Why" he said, "sweet darling, if you go papa won't have any little girl. Won't you stay with papa?"

"Well," she said, "they may burn my throat, but it won't do any good. I am going to mamma."

They burned her throat, and she lay perfectly quiet a minute or two. Then she was visited by some Sunday school children, and she turned and said: "Won't you sing, 'Shall we gather at the river?'"

And she said: "I have heard them singing it over there, and mamma is joining in."

The little children began to sing, and just as they commenced the chorus the sweet spirit of little Annie left the body with a placid, heavenly smile on its face, and went home to live with her mamma forever. No wonder the old prophet said:

"Let me live the life of the righteous and die a happy death, and may my last end be like his . . . Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

THE VISION OF SATANIC CAPTURES

Peace! Peace! Now, another incident, and then I will quit, just to show you the difference; a simple contrast. I want you to see it. During the last cruel war — and how cruel it was! — a minister in our State was summoned to Virginia by a telegram, which read:

Your brother is mortally wounded. Hurry to the front.

This minister hurried to the front as fast as the trains could carry him to the battle-fields of Virginia. When he reached Virginia he found his brother was wounded sore enough fatally. He was in a country home, and he made haste to the place, and when he walked into the room where his suffering brother was lying he went up to the bed and took his hand. He saw immediately that death was doing its work, and he said: “Brother, I am so glad to get here before your death. Brother, I am so anxious about your soul. You have been a wicked man all your life; I have prayed for you, and talked with, you many a time. Now, brother, brother, will you right here surrender your heart to God?”

“Oh,” said the wounded man, “brother, do not talk to me about my soul. I have thrown away all my health and vigorous days and despised God and religion, and now I can do nothing with every fiber of my body burning and aching. Oh, brother, I cannot talk with you now about religion.”

The next day the brother tried his best to approach him again, but the wounded brother waved him off, and said: “Brother, I am tortured to death with physical pain. Please, sir, do not trouble me now. I am unprepared and shall die unprepared, but do not torture me more than I am being tortured.” He could not approach him.

It was the sixth night this preacher brother had sat by his brother’s bedside. Loss of sleep and exhaustion and anxiety had reduced him so much and worried him so that as the wounded brother was lying quietly that night about 12 o’clock he said to himself, “I will lie down on the cot and rest for a few moments. I won’t go to sleep. I see brother is very low.” And he said, “I lay down on this cot and in a moment almost was sound asleep.”

AN AWFUL DREAM

And while asleep he dreamt that his brother died with his mouth wide open, and just as soon as the soul left the body he saw the devil come in in bodily form and approach the bed, and walk up to his dead brother and look down into his brother’s mouth and he saw that the soul was gone. And he said: “I thought that when the soul of my brother left his body it hid among the piles of wood I had piled up by the fire to keep the fire going, and the devil scented the soul, and started around to my brother’s hidden soul, and as the devil approached that hiding place the soul flew out of the room, crying ‘Lost! Lost! Lost! Forever lost!’ And,” said he, “in the distance I heard the wail of my brother’s soul as it hurried out of the reach of the devil, and in the distance I could hear the shrieks and screams of my brother’s soul as the devil fastened his talons in it forever and ever.

And,” he said, “When I woke up agitated and frightened the light had gone out” And said he, “I jumped up and lit the lamp. I walked up to the bed. There was my poor brother, lying with his mouth wide open. And I believe God shut my eyes in sleep to show me the scene that transpired in that room.”

THE LAST APPEAL

God have mercy on men who will let the last chance of being saved pass away and then go into eternity unprepared. Will you risk it! Will you risk it? How many men sitting before me, or anywhere in this church, to-night, who are not religious, who are not professors of religion, young men who are not religious, fathers who are not religious, how many of you will stand up before God and man and say:

“I don’t want to do without religion; I want to be a Christian here and live with Christians here on earth and with them forever hereafter”! How many of you will stand up to-night and say, “God being my judge, I do not want to die a sinner. I want to be a Christian; I want to be saved from sin”?

Have you interest enough in your soul to stand up and say: “I want the prayers of all who pray, I want to be saved from my sins.” Will you stand up — every person who wants to be a Christian and shun the death that never, never dies — will you stand-up! Do not be ashamed or afraid. (Quite a number of persons rose to their feet).

That is right God sees you, and I tell you a man is not far from the kingdom of God when he will stand up and say: “I want to be a Christian.” Oh, my Lord, save these people to-night. You can all sit down. God help us tonight to prepare for eternity. We have no more time to lose.

(The Christians in the audience then filed out, and gave the front seats to the penitents. Over one hundred remained for prayers, and over thirty expressed a desire to lead a Christian life and join the church. The results of last night’s vigorous work, added to previous results, show that over one hundred whilom sinners have been led to make profession of Christ as their Saviour and hope of salvation, of which one hundred something like sixty have made application for membership in Centenary Church).

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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