

A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers
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ELEVEN -

THE PERIL OF RESISTING GOD

NIGHT SERVICE, SUNDAY, JUNE 17, 1917

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Just one design is in my mind concerning these services, and that is to help the people, if and as I may, and to glorify the matchless name of CHRIST. We would do the people good, and not evil at all, in these services, and to such end, we ask that GOD's people shall not only seek to make the public services what they ought to be by their attendance, and by bringing others here, and by prayer for the preacher and for the people, but also that they will seek, personally, all through this fair city, every day during the week, and in every way that they can, to help the people religiously.

There are people whom you know, to whom you ought to talk concerning personal religion.

There are drifting Christians, going down with the currents, and they need your earnest, brotherly entreaty, that they may stop before their further loss and waste of happiness and usefulness.

And there are people who know nothing at all, experimentally, of the forgiving grace of GOD in the human heart. JESUS came to save them, and you and I need now to speak to them the best we can, as lovingly as we can, as faithfully as we can, that we may help them now.

Very grateful, indeed, is the preacher that the large audiences, these several evenings, have co-operated so heartily. We have had well-nigh perfect order, in this large outdoor meeting. When a mother needs to withdraw with the child that frets and disturbs, or if some one is ill and needs to withdraw, by just a little thoughtfulness upon the part of those going, and, especially upon the part of the rest of us who tarry, all of us making it a point not to be diverted, not to look about - - by just a little thoughtfulness even in a large outdoor throng like this, we can have well-nigh perfect order.

And now as I come to speak to you for the evening, I should like to direct your undivided attention to the text:

Text: "**Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?**" (Job 9:4)

That is a question from the book of Job, in the ninth chapter. If you shall forget all else that I say this Lord's Day evening, I pray GOD that you may not forget this text.

Mark it again: "**Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?**"

The very suggestion in the text is surprising, startling, even amazing. The suggestion is that human beings may harden themselves against GOD, and do so to their present and eternal hurt. The very suggestion, I say, is exceedingly startling. "**Who hath hardened himself against God?**" against GOD! He is our Maker.

Can there be any wisdom in one's hardening himself against his Maker? Does one need any other proof of the deadening and undoing power of sin than that sin could come into a human life and harden such life against its Maker? He is our best friend, and yet men and women, through the power of sin, through its deceitfulness, are hardened against GOD, their best friend.

The wonder grows when we remember that we whose lives are utterly contingent on GOD's holy will, are hardening ourselves against a Being of infinite power. If GOD should withdraw His moral support for just one minute from the strongest man that listens now to my voice, such man, sitting or standing, would gasp and in one moment be in the embrace of death. And yet men and women harden themselves against that Being of infinite power.

He is a Being of infinite wisdom. He knows us altogether. There is not a secret in a single heart in all this vast throng this Sunday night, but that such secret is thoroughly known to the omniscient GOD, Oh, if such fact could only be real to us for just a moment, surely it would give us pause, and give us as best we may to cease from our every evil way.

In the war of the 1860's, one of the officers of the Southern armies was taken a prisoner, and kept for quite awhile in a federal prison. In his memoirs he recounts his prison experiences. He tells us that he was guarded day and night, and that he could not look up, neither to the right, nor to the left, night or day, but that eyes were watching his every movement.

He tells us that if he started in his dreams and was rudely awakened from his sleep, standing over him and watching him were eyes that never ceased to observe his every movement. He tells us that of all the experiences, torturing and terrible, through which he passed in that fearful, fratricidal war, that one experience of eyes watching him all the time was the most torturing experience of all.

Oh, my brother men, if the truth could only come home to us properly, this very hour, that GOD sees us and knows us altogether, and that for everything in our life, whether public or secret, He will bring us into judgment at last, what a difference such fact would make in our conduct before Him!

And how the wonder grows yet more, when we remember that men and women harden their hearts against a Being of infinite goodness!

I could understand how men would make a straight fight with Satan, seeking to resist him and put his devices all away, when they remember that Satan is man's persistent and never-ceasing enemy, and that Satan means mischief, and mischief only, and not good at all to any and every human being. When men and women find out the awful power of Satan to hurt a human life, for to-day and for to-morrow and for the eternal beyond, I could understand how men and women would rise up with a fixed resolve, and say: "Satan shall not have our service. He shall not have our allegiance. He Shall not have us. We will break with him and put him away."

And yet, wonder of wonders, men do not break like that with Satan, but men break with GOD, that Being of infinite goodness. He holds our lives in the hollow of His hand. Every mercy that comes to us in life, from the largest down to the very smallest, He is its giver and sender. He means good, and good only, and not evil at all, to us everyone.

Oh, how can men and women harden themselves against a Being like that, infinite in kindness and patience and goodness and forbearance toward us?

That is, indeed, a pathetic picture in the earthly life of JESUS.

One day He had preached to the people His wondrous words of light and hope and wisdom and love, and as the day wore towards evening, they gnashed upon Him in their rage, and they took up stones wherewith to stone Him, and JESUS turned to the crowd that sought to stone Him, and spoke to them these plaintive words: "**Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?**"

That is to say:

- "Do you stone me because I am telling you the right way to live?
- "Do you stone me because I am counseling you to break with every wrong thing, because wrong brings nothing but hurt, and cannot do good at all?
- "Do you stone me because I point the way of hope and love and life to people groping in the dark?
- "Do you stone me because I speak the words of cheer to people downhearted and fearful?
- "Do you stone me because I open the gates of promise and of hope to people who need a constant and all-helpful friend?

For which of the works that I have done do you stone me?"

That is the question that the Master asks to-night of this vast concourse of people, assembled in Fort Worth. "Oh, man or woman, not on my side, but on Satan's side, what have I done that provokes you to be against me, your best friend?" What does your heart. answer to such question?

How do people harden themselves against GOD? The ways are many. I may indicate just a few of those ways that are commonest, and you will think of others that may not, because of the limits of this hour, mention at all.

How do men harden themselves against GOD? Full many a time do they do so, because of the power of sin that strengthens in the life the longer that such sin is indulged. Human life is not stationary. Men go up or down.

Men are constantly climbing or descending in human life. Therefore, GOD's admonition is given that people shall be saved while they are yet young: "**Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.**" The longer that sin is indulged, the mightier, the more strengthful, the more binding does it become in a human life. You may take any sin, no matter what, and the longer that sin is given rein and allowed to run riot like it wishes, the more that sin grows and strengthens.

Take the sin of drink, and I do not mention that because I think it is the worst. Heaven knows that it is bad enough, and yet there may be other sins far worse. But take the sin of drink, for illustration. Do I speak to some man here who drinks, perhaps to excess? Let him not be afraid that I shall speak one cruel word concerning him. I shall not. The rather would I come to him, and stretch out to him a brother's hand, and say to him: "May I not help you?" I would help him if I could. But do I speak to some man here who drinks to excess? Let him retrace his past days, even back to the first day when he began that ill-fated habit. He was probably well-reared.

He was warned against the subtle power of the habit of drink. A dear mother, when he went away, pressed her kisses through her tears upon his face, and besought him to steer clear of that undoing habit - drink. And other voices, Father's and teacher's, and still other voices, warned him against the deadly peril that there is in the habit of drink. Doesn't he recall it all?

And then there came a time when he was away from home, and when he was urged to take his first drink. He remembers even now, as I speak of it, how his hand trembled as he put that cup to his lips, and he thrust his eye to the right and to the left, if haply some face out of the past would come forth to forbid his taking that ill-fated step.

And then he had taken his first drink.

Oh, that was the beginning of the down-dragging of his life! The first drink is the drink that makes the drunkard - not the last. And the years came on and the habit strengthened. Do I speak to such one here to-night?

There came to my home, a little while ago, one of our citizens for whom I have long felt the deepest religious interest.

It was two o'clock in the morning when my door bell rang, and when I answered, I said to the man: "What on earth brings you here at this hour of the night?" He came into the hall at my invitation, and said: "You can see, can't you?" And I could see. I did see.

He was then in the clutches of drink.

His fearful habit had its terrible hold upon him at that same hour. Then he said to me: "I have

come because I want to hold your hands, and get down at your knees, and have you swear me in the sight of GOD that I will break such habit, for I must break it ere it shall utterly break me." Then he said: "I have just come from home. I went home a little while ago, late in the night, and my little wife had one talk with me that broke my heart, and breaks it when I call it to mind. She said to me: 'Husband, you have broken my heart. If you do not desist soon, I shall be gone, for I am completely crushed, even in health, by your course.'

And while she was talking," he said, "my old mother heard us, and came from her room across the hall, frail and aged, and put her arms about my shoulders, and sobbed her broken heart out on my neck, and said: 'Son, if you do not quit soon, mother will go to her grave believing that her son is doomed for a drunkard's death.'

And no sooner had she talked like that than my little daughter came, in the grip of typhoid fever, where she had been for weeks unable to sit up, and yet she had heard the conversation, and was so moved that the child, just beginning her teens, somehow got to me, ere I knew it, and was clutching at my coat, a little skeleton from her sickness, and she said:

'Papa, you are breaking the hearts of us all, and killing us all. If you do not quit soon, we will all be dead.'

And the big fellow sobbed aloud and said: "I cannot quit. I am helpless. I am so driven and beaten and weak, I cannot quit."

Now, sin does that.

- You let it loose,
- you give it the reins,
- and it will vitiate,
- it wilt pull down,
- and it wilt deaden and destroy.

I repeat again, I do not name that sin because I think it is the worst. There are others, perhaps more deadly, more undoing than that. I take that to illustrate the point that the longer sin is indulged, the more terrible does it become in its power to deaden and harden the heart, *How do men and women harden themselves against GOD?*

Full many a time they do it through the power of public opinion. The longer I live and study men and women, and see their conduct, the more am I convinced of the truth of that solemn saying in the Bible: "**The fear of man bringeth a snare.**"

Oh, what power there is in public opinion! One waits for another. One acts because of another. One is silent because another is silent. Just there comes in the awful peril and power of influence. The man who does not care about his influence over somebody else surely must be a fool or a monster, or both.

We must be forever careful about our influence over others, for by our silent influence, day in and out, we are taking people up with us or we are taking them down, We are making it easier or

making it harder every day we live for other people to live, as is our influence over them.

You do not wonder that when George Whitfield was converted, he prayed as his first prayer: "Oh, GOD, forgive me for my wasted influence over other people!"

George Whitfield had been a ring-leader in sin.

He had led many people astray, but when he had found CHRIST for himself, he fell down before Him and cried out: "Oh, GOD, forgive me for my misused influence over other men!"

Surely, he could not have prayed a saner prayer than that. And you do not wonder that still another man, a little while ago, when they told him that he was dying, that his last hour had come, gathered the covering about him and sought to hide his face, and said to the people, out of the pitiableness of his condition: "Yes, and when I am gone, as the doctor says I soon shall be, be certain to gather up my influence and bury it in the grave with me."

But that is the very thing that cannot be done. Your influence is going on now, and will go on and on, when you shall sleep beneath the flowers. Oh, the power of influence! That ought to give pause to every serious man and woman in the world.

I would rather be nailed up in my coffin, strong and well as I am this Sunday night, and buried alive, than to live a life that would damn somebody else. Human influence is that serious and that terrible.

I was preaching in a series of meetings in one of our cities some time ago, and I noticed a young fellow, for three or four consecutive evenings, far down the hall before me, a lad, I should say, of some sixteen years. When I asked: "Are there people to-night interested in being saved? Will they lift the hand or stand?" This lad for three or four evenings made response without any delay.

Then another evening came, and there he was, but he made no response, and indeed seemed indifferent. Then the next meeting came, and I looked for him, and I found him at last, but far to the rear of the hall-evidently indifferent, deliberately indifferent. I could read it in his face.

And when the service was concluded that night I hurried around, if haply I might find the young fellow, to have a word with him, and fortunately I found him, and took him aside, so that I could have a word alone. I said to him:

"I have seen you in the audience, and my heart has been strangely drawn to you. For two or three evenings, you indicated that you wished to be a Christian, and now for these past two evenings you have said by your face and conduct that you are indifferent to such matter. Pray tell me what has happened."

Then he looked up into my face, and plaintively said: "I think I had rather not tell you. I was interested," he went on to say. "I was deeply concerned by what you said. I did tell you that I desired to be a Christian, and I meant it, but I have reached a different conclusion. I think I had rather not tell you why."

I said: "My lad, I should not like to take any advantage of you at all. I would not for my right

arm willingly take an advantage of any man or woman who comes to hear me preach. I would not like to be impertinent, but I should like to know what has come to turn you away from facing that open gate to the heavenly world and to the better life. Something has come. I should like to know what it is, that I may help you."

Then he said:

"Very well, I will tell you. My Father is Dr. So-and-so.

My Father never goes to church. I never knew of his being at church in all my life. I have decided to follow my Father, and not follow you at all. My Father is to me the most splendid man in the world" - just what a boy ought to think about his Father, if possible.

"My Father," said the boy, "is my model man. He is the cleverest man I know, and the strongest man I know, and I have made my choice, and I am going to follow my Father, and I am not going to follow you. Father says by his example that the Christian religion is not worth while. I am going to say it, too, as long as my Father says it. That has changed my course," said the handsome lad.

Oh, wasn't it pitiable, even heart-breaking? I said some other things to him, and among them I said: "Come on to the services, and I will do my best to help you yet, and I will do my best to help your honored Father, and I want to think about it through the night."

My sleep was troubled, the whole night through, about that unusual case, but when the morning came my mind was made up: "I shall go to see the Father and introduce myself to him, and cast myself upon GOD for wisdom to have some words with that Father, about what is involved." And when the morning came I made my way to his office, and fortunately found him alone. I was the first to arrive. When I introduced myself to him and found that he was the man I was seeking, he turned upon me with beaming, searching face, and said:

"Certainly, you have not come for yourself. You are evidently not a sick man."

I said: "I have not come for myself at all. I have come to have a word with you about your own boy."

And then he was all alert in his attention, and he said: "Do you know my boy?"

I said: "Slightly."

Then he said: "Isn't he a fine boy?"

I said: "I should say that I never saw a finer one. My heart is drawn out to him profoundly, and I have come just to have a frank word with you about your boy."

He said: "In what way? To what end?"

Then I said: "I am preaching for a few days in your city."

"Oh," he said, "I see. I have noticed something of it in the daily papers."

I said: "Your boy has been hearing me, Doctor, for several nights, and your boy seemed deeply serious for three or four nights, and indicated his seriousness, and then he deliberately put such matter away.

His deliberate purpose was written in his very face and voiced in his conduct, and I sought him out last night and had a word with him. He was exceedingly reticent, and he was grandly loyal to you, but when I asked him why he had deliberately determined to turn a way from the call of CHRIST and the Christian religion, he made answer that you, his Father, were his model, his beau ideal, his pattern, and he had decided to follow you, and not follow me, nor follow anybody else.

I have come just to tell you that, and to ask if you do not have too much involved to let the matter stand like it is?"

His face was colorless almost in a moment, and then he walked the room under terrific pressure for another moment, and then he turned to me and said: "That is the heaviest blow, sir, I ever received."

And then I said to him: "Doctor, what do you think you ought to say about it?"

He waited a moment, and said: "When is your next service?"

I said: "At ten o'clock, this morning."

He said: "I cannot go at ten, because of an engagement for a needed operation at the hospital. When is your next service?"

"This evening, at eight o'clock."

Then he looked at me with strength of purpose, and said: "I will be in your service to-night, and I will give this matter immediate attention. I think I know what to do, sir. I will see you to-night."

I bade him good-morning without another word.

I had said all I ought to have said, it seemed, on that first visit. The day wore to nightfall, and I stood up to preach, and my eyes searched the press of people everywhere. Is that Father present? Yonder he is. He is just coming in now, and the usher is giving him a chair, far to the rear.

That evening I preached to one man. Oh, if we can get him, we are likely to get his fine boy, and we may get many because of the two! When I had finished my sermon, I simply raised this question: "Is the man here who, on high principle, for his own sake first, and then for the sake of somebody sheltering behind him, will now and here take his step Christward, and give his heart's surrender to the call of CHRIST? Is he here? Let him come down the aisle and take my hand in token of such surrender to CHRIST."

And the Father was on his feet, and down the aisle he came, and there went through the audience

something like an electric thrill, for everybody there seemed to know him and profoundly respect him. Now he had reached me here at the front, and he took my hand and the first word he said was: "My boy got me. What you told me about my boy this morning got me."

And then he went on and said: "When you left me, I shut the door and locked it, and I knelt down in my room and I tried to pray, as I have not done in years, and I said: "Oh, GOD, forgive me, for not only am I staying out of the kingdom of GOD myself, but I am keeping my own boy out. Has it come to that? Forgive me, and not another hour will I wait to make my surrender, to turn my case over to CHRIST, the Great Physician, that He may forgive me and save me His own way."

I said to him: "Look, Doctor, behind you!" And there, standing behind him, following him down the long aisle, was that handsome boy, and the boy put his arm around his Father's neck, as a little child fondles its mother, and, sobbing, said: "Oh, papa, I am glad you came, and I have come, too. I wanted to come, and I waited for you."

What if that Father had not come? GOD save the mark! I know Fathers who have not come, and the boys have not come, either, and now and then I know a mother - oh, can it be? A mother! Sweetest name of all, next to the name of JESUS! A mother! A mother! - now and then I know a mother who does not come, and her best friend, JESUS, is set aside. By the power of her influence, however silent, she says to the children of her own being: "This great matter of personal religion is not great at all!"

Oh, influence, how many thou art destroying! How many thou art turning away from GOD!

If I am speaking to-night to parents, Father or mother, who are not Christians; if I speak to-night to citizens, whoever they may be, not Christians; if I speak to-night to young men or middle-aged, or to one with the gray about his temples, not Christians, oh, my friends, my friends, my friends, I send my voice out after you, do not misuse your influence, and cause it to hurt with eternal hurt the lives of people around you!

How do people harden themselves against GOD? Full many a time they do it by raising captious doubts and speculative questions about religion. They do it by asking questions about religion, and asking them superficially, and then not staying to answer them. They say, for example, What if this be not so? And then they do not delve into the matter, to probe it to see if it is so.

- They say, What if there be no GOD?
- They say, What if JESUS CHRIST be not trustworthy?
- They say, What if the Bible be not GOD's guide-book for men, to lead them homeward and heavenward?
- They say, What if there be no heaven for the people who will not have JESUS?
- They say, What if these much talked of matters be not so at all?

And then, like an ostrich, they hide their heads down in the sand, and they do not see, and will not face the facts.

I wonder if I speak to-night to some skeptic, no matter how dark and deep his skepticism; to some doubter, to some disbeliever, concerning the things of CHRIST's holy religion? If I do, I

call to him as his brother man, oh, my friend, you can know the facts about Christianity - you can know the facts.

If a man be a doubter, a skeptic, an atheist, a materialist, an agnostic, who flings all religious belief to the winds if his case be that darksome and that terrible, I come to him to-night to say that he can get light and will get it, if he will just be candid with GOD.

Professor Bushnell got it - that famous teacher in Yale.

In the days when he was a most popular teacher there, and also an outstanding disbeliever concerning religion, a young preacher went to Yale, to preach two weeks.

For days and days there seemed to be no response to his preaching.

The young fellows heard him, but there was no response heavenward, so far as the minister could tell. A little later he had diagnosed the situation. The young men were hiding behind Professor Bushnell, the most popular teacher in Yale, and the minister sought out Professor Bushnell and said:

"Professor Bushnell, if these things that I am preaching are so, wouldn't you like to know it? If CHRIST be praiseworthy, wouldn't you like to know it? If CHRIST does change men who trust Him, and forgive them, and put a power super-human in their lives, wouldn't you like to know it?"

And Bushnell, after a thoughtful pause, said: "Certainly, I would like to know it, if the thing be reliable and praiseworthy!"

Then said the minister: "You can know it, if you will just be candid."

"How?" said Professor Bushnell.

"Take CHRIST's own challenge," said the minister, "and here is that challenge: **If any man willeth to do the will of God, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God!**"

"But," said Bushnell, "I do not know how to start. I do not know that there is any GOD at all. How could I start?"

Said the minister: "Start like this: 'Oh, GOD, if there be such a Being, give me light on this matter of religion. If thou hast any interest in my getting light, and if thou wilt give me light, no matter how it comes, I will follow such light wherever it leads!' Take that clue, and you will find GOD."

Professor Bushnell said: "I will take it."

Three days afterwards, Bushnell came back and stood on the rostrum of the old chapel and said to his students: "My men, I have a wonderful thing to tell you. I laughed to scorn all that this man preached, and all the rest of them, and the churches. I have found out that I was in the

darkness and they were in the light.

Oh," said Bushnell to his students, "I have put GOD to the test, and I know that He is the Saviour, and I am henceforth His disciple and friend forever."

Men can know, my fellow-men, whether CHRIST and His Gospel are true.

I see this challenge of JESUS put to the test and gloriously found out, week after week.

It was my privilege a few weeks ago to speak for five days to the students of our State University at Austin - a really great university, which should have the loyal support of every citizen in our State.

While there, I was not only speaking publicly - I was dealing privately with those scores and hundreds of young men and women. There sought me out one day one of the seniors in the law class, and he said to me: "All that you are preaching and all that religion proclaims is as dark to me as the darkest midnight."

I said to him: "If there be reality and truth in the religion of CHRIST, wouldn't you like to know it?"

He said: "Indeed, I would. I would like to know the truth, whatever it is."

Then I said: "I will give you a clue. Tell GOD! If there be one, that you want light, if He has any concern for you to have it, and tell Him that if He will give it, no matter what it costs, nor where it leads, you will follow that light, and you will find it."

It was not long until he came back from his quest, his face shining like the morning, with this public confession: "I have found out in my heart that GOD is, and what is better, I have found out that GOD has forgiven me and saved me." Yes, yes, men can find the way of light if they will only be candid. If you are in trouble about questions religious, come with absolute candor, and say: "Lord God, here I am, an eternity-bound being, and I want light from GOD, in GOD's way, and if He will give it, I will walk in it," and you will get light.

How do people harden themselves against GOD? They do it through the theory that they will save themselves. The thought of their own self-salvation leads many, it is to be feared, to harden their hearts. And what shall I say at that point? Can any man save himself? Can any woman save herself? Can a soul wrong with GOD save himself? Such soul can cross the storm-swept ocean from one shore to the other on a straw for a boat as easily as you can save yourself without the grace and mercy of GOD.

Oh, soul, if a sinner could have saved himself, then JESUS, the Son of GOD, would not have come down from heaven and died on a cross, the most horrible death that earth hath ever known. If a sinner could have saved himself, that cross is a work of supererogation, that cross is a mistake and a crime. Because sinners cannot save themselves, therefore did JESUS come. And when He comes He tells us: "**I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.**"

He tells us: "**Marvel not that I tell you, unless you are born again, you cannot even see the kingdom of God.**"

He tells us: "**Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**"

He tells us: "**Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.**"

Oh, soul, never, never, can you save yourself! Do not be hardened in heart at that vital point.

How do men and women harden themselves against GOD? Full many a time they do it on this wise: They do it by looking around them, and putting their finger on some alleged poor Christian and hypocrites, that they can find all about them, on the right hand and on the left, and in that way they harden themselves against GOD.

And what shall I say at that point? Are these who are unbelievers able to put their finger down on poor Christians all about them? Are these who are unbelievers able to put their finger down now and then on some hypocrite in the church? Are they able to do it? GOD pity us, yes, they are!

And are there poor Christians in the churches, and is there now and then some pretender in the churches? GOD save the mark, yes, yes! But what of that? Oh, come now, I pray you, be consistent. Will you throw all the money away, because there are counterfeiters in the land molding false money? Will you throw the good money away, because counterfeit money is sometimes in circulation? Come now, will you throw all the fruit away because you discover some decaying fruit there in the basket or the barrel of fruit that you purchase? Pass it on up higher.

Come now, will you fling your soul out into the night which will never have any morning, because somebody around you is not living the Christian life like that Christian life ought to be lived? I call your attention yet a moment more to this serious point.

GOD calls your attention to it in this solemn language. Listen to Him. I quote it now:

"Therefore thou art inexcusable, oh, man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself." Are you able to put your finger down on some faulty, defective Christian, or some arrant pretender? What of that? JESUS looks down upon you and says: "After I died for you, and offer to save you with mine everlasting salvation, will you discard me and destroy yourself, because somebody around you does not live up to the proper standard of the Christian life?" Oh, soul, be done with such trifling!

How do people harden themselves against GOD? Most of all, I think, just at this point, namely, at the point of procrastination. They tell us truly that procrastination is the thief of time. Ah, me is it is so much worse than that.

Procrastination is the thief of human souls. Procrastination steals human souls away from hope and life and eternal peace. All about us there are men and women wrong with GOD, and when

they are approached, they will confess it; they will grant their duty and their need; they will express their desire; they will confess frankly that they desire to be saved; they will tell you promptly: "I mean some day, and not far off, to give my soul its proper attention." But they drift with the tide, and through the power of procrastination not only is time stolen, but their souls are stolen, and thus are they finally lost. Oh, the tragedy of it - the tragedy unspeakable of such procrastination!

When that ill-fated ship went down long years ago, the *Royal Charter* - a ship in its time corresponding to the Titanic, that was wrecked a little while ago in mid-ocean - when the *Royal Charter* was burned, that strong ship had toured the waters of the world, and had on board a distinguished company of passengers, and they were to land finally on their return voyage at Liverpool, and great preparations were being made in Liverpool to welcome them home. Many of the passengers were Liverpool citizens, and homes were being put in order, and, indeed, the whole city was being put in order to welcome the returning and cherished passengers.

And yet on that last night, just a few hours before they reached Liverpool, the ship caught fire, and despite all the efforts to save it, the ship sank to the depths of the sea, nearly all of the passengers drowning with the sinking ship. Only a few escaped to tell the terrible story. The morning came, and all Liverpool was agog with interest to welcome the people, not knowing of the sinking of the ship, and then the few survivors came ashore, and told the awful story to the people.

Then the story had to be carried to the homes in Liverpool. Dr. W. M. Taylor, one of the first ministers of his generation, tells us that he was commissioned to carry the story of the sinking ship to one of his families, and to tell the little wife that her devoted husband and the Father of her children would come back to his earthly home never again.

The minister said he went on such journey with his heart in his throat, and when he reached the home and rang the bell, a little flaxen haired girl came and welcomed him laughingly, and merrily said: "Dr. Taylor, papa is to be here, and mamma is getting him a fine breakfast, and you will stay, and I will run and tell mamma." And she scampered away to tell her mother, and then the mother came in and gladly bade him welcome, and said: "Oh, you have come at the right time! Husband is to be here in a few minutes." And then she started back.

She said: "What on earth is it, Dr. Taylor? What has happened? Do not keep me in suspense. Why do you look like you look?" And he took her hand in his and said: "Little woman, I am the bearer of evil tidings. The ship has gone down, just a little distance from the shore, down to the depths of the sea, and your husband is drowned there with the rest."

She looked at him a moment, he said, and her face turned pale with the whiteness almost of the snow, and rigid like a stone, and then she uttered one piercing cry and fell unconscious at his feet. This was her cry: "Oh, GOD, he got so near home, and yet will never come!"

That is the parable, and that is the picture of men and women in this Gospel land of ours, who hear, and who feel, and who know, and yet who, through procrastination, will miss the upward way. Oh, soul, do not longer procrastinate! Do not longer delay, with this eternally important matter of your personal salvation.

I have a moment more to ask your attention before we shall go, and you will give it the best attention you can, despite the passing, ringing fire bells - a moment more, and you will give your earnest attention, for the text is not quite done. What shall I say?

Listen to the text again: "**Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath ever prospered?**" Do you know one who hath hardened himself against GOD and hath ever prospered? Do you know one? Oh, that word "prosperity" is a charmed word!

That word "*prosperity*" is a hypnotic word. For prosperity men rise early and toil late. For prosperity men sail the rolling seas, men tunnel the mountains, men seek to make every sort of discovery, in order that they may win prosperity. What is prosperity? What a charmed word it is! There can be no real and abiding prosperity if we set ourselves to neglect GOD and His proffered salvation of our needy souls. "**Who hath hardened himself against God, and hath ever prospered?**" Do you know one?

Do you know one who hath set himself against GOD and stayed so set, and yet has really prospered? Do you know one?

- Did Cain prosper, who took his brother's life? See him as he went to pariah into the forests!
- Did King Saul of old prosper?
- Did Balaam prosper?
- Did Ananias and Sapphira prosper?
- Did Judas, who sold JESUS for thirty pieces of silver?

Do you know one of your acquaintances who has hardened himself utterly against GOD, and has really prospered?

Let me tell you how one of the chiefest business men of the West died a little while ago. He had his son to sit beside him, and said to the rest: "I have some words with my son," and holding that son's hand in his own frail, dying hand, he said to his son: "Son, you are holding the hand of the greatest failure of any man of toe West." And the son said: "No, no, Father; your name on the wires would make the business world quiver throughout the great West." He said: "Very true, my son, but I have lived as though time and the world were all, and I am dying now with unpreparedness, and all is dark. I am the greatest failure of all, for I have lived simply for earth and for time."

One of the best known citizens of Texas, who gave his heart to CHRIST when he was nearly eighty years old, said to me the last time I saw him, just before his departure - and his name is a household word in Texas: "Oh, sir, my life was almost totally lost. I did not come to CHRIST till right in the fag end of life. I did not come until the sun was going down in the west. Yes," he said "CHRIST has saved me, but, oh, to think, sir, that I have given nearly all my life to the wrong side!" Doesn't the picture make your heart shudder?

What is the conclusion of this whole matter? I sum it up in some final sentences. There can be no real and abiding prosperity for a human soul that is set against GOD, no matter how much he claims, no matter how wide his swath of power may seem to be, no matter who he is. There can be no real and abiding prosperity, if the human heart be set with disobedience against GOD. At

last it comes down to ashes, and it cries with one of old: "My soul feedeth on ashes." And mark you this, my men and women; mark you this: When the battle of the soul is finally lost, all is lost. There are some battles that can be regained, - but not the battle of the soul finally lost.

Therefore JESUS' arresting question: "**What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**" Some losses have compensations, but the loss final of the soul has no compensation. When Francis the First lost the battle of Pavia, he got his broken, scattered men together, and sobbed like a child with them, and said: "Men, we have lost all but honor;" but having honor left, they could go to the battle again. Some losses have compensations, but not the final loss of the soul. Some losses can be repaired, but not this loss. If you shall take your way down into death and into eternity, without making a surrender true and honest to CHRIST, the battle is lost. CHRIST himself so tells us: "**Ye shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.**"

What arguments shall I marshal this night to summon this audience to give the right attention to the call of CHRIST for the salvation of the human soul? What arguments shall I marshal?

Shall I talk about duty? Here is your first duty - to see after the safety and welfare of your soul

Shall I talk about need? He is your chiefest need. More than you need money and position and friends and health, and even physical life, do you need to be a Christian.

Shall I talk about influence? Your position for CHRIST shall help others upward - and your position against Him shall take others downward.

Shall I talk about happiness? Here is your supreme happiness.

Shall I talk about usefulness? Oh, what can compare with living a life so as to be useful in the broadest and deepest and most constructive way?

Oh, my friends, my friends, harden not your hearts against CHRIST! Before I let you go away very soon I am coming now to ask: Has this vast audience made peace with CHRIST? Have the men and women before me, who have heard with such patience and attention to-night, for which I thank you so gratefully, made their peace with GOD? Are the men and women under the sound of my voice at peace with GOD, through CHRIST?

Now this night, before you sleep, even here and now, as you stand to manifest your desire to be saved, as the Lord liveth, if you will honestly surrender your case to CHRIST, you shall here and now be born again. No matter what your fears, your sins, your weaknesses, your doubts, your temptations - no matter what was your yesterday, no matter what your to-day, no matter what shall be your to-morrow, you shall be saved, forgiven, born again, as the Lord liveth, if you will honestly surrender your case to CHRIST. End once and forever the great matter by your personal acceptance of CHRIST as your Saviour, just now, while we pray.

THE CLOSING PRAYER.

And now, O Lord, ere the crowd disperses, we would gather up every life, and as best we can

present it to GOD, and pray Him in CHRIST's name to put His hand of mercy and forgiveness and salvation on every needy life in this vast throng. Here, all about us, are men and women who say to us: "We are wrong with GOD and know it, and we wish to be right with Him."

O GOD, teach them now that it is CHRIST who makes the case right. Teach them that no man can work the great change which a sinner in GOD's sight must have, in order to meet GOD in safety and peace. Teach them now that salvation is of the Lord. Grant that now all these interested men and women may turn to CHRIST, and before they put their heads upon their pillows to sleep to-night, say simply: "Here, Lord, we give ourselves to Thee, 'tis all that we can do."

Thank GOD, it is all CHRIST asks, but He asks that. He asks for honest, absolute surrender. May every seeking soul answer Him back: "Then I give it. With my doubts and fears and sins and difficulties all, I will surrender to Him. Living or dying, no matter what may come, I will surrender my ease forever to CHRIST, the appointed righteousness and Saviour for needy, helpless sinners."

Lord, let these men and women, a multitude about us, thus surrender to Thee to-night. And if in this presence there were those too hesitant and timid to express their desire to be saved, but whose hearts do wish to be right with GOD, O, draw them, too, and save them, too. And if in this presence there is one man or woman or child indifferent to CHRIST's call, indifferent to CHRIST's death, indifferent to the inevitable day of personal death, indifferent to human influence, indifferent to the testing that is coming at GOD's judgment bar indifferent to the life to be lived here and to the death that shall follow such life, indifferent to eternity - O, our Father If there be one to-night in the great press about us who is indifferent to these high calls of heaven and of GOD, by the power of thy spirit teach and lead such one to-night to be profoundly concerned to find the true way to live and to serve GOD.

And may this mighty throng be bound as one life about the heart of GOD, so that it shall be well with every one, living, dying, and beyond forever. Deepen this work in all our hearts. Time flies. Sin is busy, and death works all about us. Remind us profoundly, O Lord God, that to-day is the day of salvation, that to-day is the day of grace, that to-day is the day of spiritual opportunity. GOD give us to seize to-day, and to use it like we ought, to use it even while we can.

And now, as the people go, may the blessing of GOD, even of Father! Son, and Holy Spirit, be granted you all and each, to abide with you forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 11 ~
