

# “PAY-DAY—SOME DAY”

With Other Sketches From Life and Messages From The Word

by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### PAY-DAY—SOME DAY

One of the first Bible verses my mother taught me as A child was: “**Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.**” I believed that in my childhood days; I practiced it in the days of my youth. It never failed in the days of young manhood, and now in the afternoon of my life as I walk down the hillside surrounded by real friends and loved ones; I believe it more firmly than ever.

When I left the wholesale field and ventured into the retail shoe business I bought out a dealer who had been in business for some thirty years and it gave me a thrill to put a sign on the window that the place had changed hands, and then I added another sign which read: “This place will not be open Sundays. It is the Lord’s Day.”

The opening day was a Thursday and I was waited upon by a committee of men who represented the business men of that neighborhood, who welcomed me to the street. They also invited me to join the association, and when I consented they told me I had to abide by the by-laws, and that included having my store open and closed certain evenings and also open on Sundays. Then I told them I could not join their cooperative association . . . “Do you see that sign?” and I pointed to the “Not open Sundays” card.

“Yes, we noticed that,” they added, “but no one can be successful by closing on Sundays, as the stores in this neighborhood transact about a third of their business on Sundays” (Friends will recall that some thirty years ago it was the general practice of all small communities to have all stores open Sundays).

When I was stubborn and added that I’d be ashamed to admit I couldn’t make a living in six days but had to use the seventh, they tried their level best to show me how everyone had a spirit of co-operation on this street and I was doomed to bankruptcy if I closed on Sunday, and they wanted a young man like myself to be successful, and the only way would be to co-operate to the fullest extent with this co-operative association that existed wholly for the benefit of the business men. (They surely represented the spirit of co-operation among themselves; one was a doctor, the other a druggist, and the third an undertaker—all they needed to make it complete was a preacher).

Now thirty years have passed into history with the many failures, bankruptcies and untold depressions that an uptown community has to pass through, and strange as it may seem, I'm the only businessman left among those many hundreds who were in this famous up-town section some thirty years ago who is still in business. And, stranger still is the fact that I now have three stores instead of one and during this time have never had any financial trouble or lawsuits.

I admit it has been a struggle and my boat has gone through storms of testing, but it has stood the test.

"Oh," you say, "you are simply a better businessman than the others."

Thanks, it feels good to have kind words said regarding one's ability, but the facts are that I knew of many excellent stores on the street and owners who were far superior to me when it came to knowledge, money and general ability, but you see I had a Partner who never knew of failure, and Jesus is still my Partner, and He never fails.

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After going through four years of hardships in this country, conditions such as it would be useless to even mention, as it would sound unbelievable to children in this present age, I was fortunate to get a job in one of Chicago's large department stores. The pay was not much for a willing fellow of sixteen, but it was better than the other jobs I had had.

Mother's eczema had gotten worse so we moved into a little larger flat and took in more boarders and this new pay helped to relieve my hard-working mother. After working for sometime in the stock room I sought a promotion, and with mother's help succeeded in having the friends who sort of made our home their Thursday headquarters (the servant girls who had their off-day) to come downtown and ask for me when they needed shoes. This was so successful that every Thursday I would have many call for me until the boss decided that I was worth more down in the department selling shoes than up in the stock room, so he told me to put on a good suit every Thursday and take my place with the clerks. This worked so well that I began asking friends to come also on Saturdays, and by and by I also became a Saturday salesman, until I was made a regular salesman.

One day a lady came and bought a pair of shoes and as I handed her the package to receive her money she asked me what size they were and I told her "Size eight."

She heatedly remarked that she didn't wear such a big size. "Well," I said, "what size do you wear?" and she replied, "Size five." "Well, I can give you a size five," I added, but she refused and would not take them. "They fit all right and they are the style I want, but remember young man, I don't wear any such size as that" (Years ago the women took special pride in having small feet, so the dealers marked the shoes with French sizes, various marks, that people could not read and then marked them with pencil on the bottoms with two and three sizes smaller than they really were). She walked out on me and left me standing holding the shoes, and just then the boss walked in.

“What’s the matter? Couldn’t you fit her?” The boss kept questioning me until I became nervous. I asked him to let me tell him the story, at the conclusion of which he asked me why I didn’t tell her they were a size five.

“Because I am a Christian and cannot tell lies,” I answered.

“Then you are fired!” was his sudden comeback. “We want men who can produce here and can’t use fellows like you who can’t tell a lie in order to make a sale.”

I wept as I told him of a sick mother who depended on every cent of my salary and asked if I might go back up to the stock room and work as a stock clerk again.

“Yes, I’ll let you go up there, but you will have to be satisfied with the former small salary.”

That day was one of the saddest I have ever lived through. Even today it acts as a sort of nightmare as I again recall that heart-crushing moment when I handed over my sales book at the counter with all the other clerks watching me in this moment of disgrace, with tears rolling down my cheeks as I walked from that shoe department, especially when I noticed the look of satisfaction on some of those ungodly clerks.

As I walked past the book department I noticed a sign advertising Sheldon’s new book, *“In His Steps, Or What Would Jesus Do?”*

I knew what Jesus would do. He oftentimes went up into the mountain to pray to His Father, so I decided to do the same, and I took the elevator up to the top floor and closed the door behind me in that stock room and threw myself against a shoe case and on my knees that afternoon I fought a battle with God alone. I began by arguing with God that after all it didn’t pay. Here I had tried to seek first the kingdom of God, but I had lost my job by so doing. After all it didn’t pay to be a Christian. Had I served the devil I would have had a job, etc. But before I got up from my praying position there was victory in my soul. I said to God: “I can’t understand it, but I believe your promises are true. I’ll trust You even though I can’t see it just now.”

The trip home that day was a gloomy one. As I walked up the stairs in the rear of our tenement home I walked up very quietly, opened the door so carefully, skipped by mother as she stood by the kitchen stove and went into my room and shut the door. Mother thought it strange that I didn’t greet her as usual, so she came after me.

She asked me if I was sick, or if there was something the matter with me, or if I had lost my job. I tried to evade all these questions, but you can’t fool Mother. So at last I told her what had happened. Without a moment’s hesitation she said: “Let’s kneel down and pray.”

I shall never forget that prayer meeting. Mother just placed her loving arms around me, those arms that so often had carried me with tenderness when I was little, and those hands that had gotten rough and calloused for my comfort touched my tear-drenched face as she said:

“Lord God, I thank Thee for my boy that I love with all my heart, and for the love he has for this unworthy mother by getting up in the early hours and walking those miles each morning and night, and now he has lost that position over which he has been so happy, but, Lord Jesus, we can do without butter on our bread and have meat less often, as long as my boy loves Jesus.”

That’s the kind of mothers to have. Two years passed by when one day the boss was caught stealing and was discharged. Someone had to be put in his place immediately until a permanent appointment could be made. Without knowing anything about it I was called down to the office and the general manager asked me: “Is your name Bennie?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How old are you?”

“Nineteen,” I answered.

“How long have you been in this country?”

“Seven years,” was my reply.

“How long have you worked here?”

“Three years,” came my reply.

“Ever been fired here?”

“Yes, sir, twice” (I thought he was going to fire me the third time).

“What for?” he asked me.

“Once because I would not work on Sunday and the other because I would not tell a lie about a size.”

He took me by the hand and I can yet see the smile on that red-whiskered face. “I like you, young fellow.”

Then he told me what had taken place. “You are too young to have such a responsible position and then you haven’t had proper schooling, but I somehow like your grit and principle. I’m going to give you a month’s trial, or until I can find the right manager. Come down tomorrow with your best suit on and a white shirt and collar, because you will be in charge of the shoe department from tomorrow.”

Here I was, the youngest shoe buyer State Street ever had had, in charge of some hundred and twenty clerks. I kept the position for two years, but because of overwork and evening studies at the Y. M. C. A. College to fit me for a business executive position, I contracted a serious sickness which made it necessary to give up inside work.

When this became known to the officials of this great institution they made it possible for me to get an outside job representing a well known wholesale house, and paid me the same large salary that I was paid as buyer and manager.

When I accepted the traveling salesman's position I joined the Gideons, and one Sunday night I told my story in a Sunday night service conducted by this famous Christian traveling men's organization in the old Baptist Church on Chicago's North Side.

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Twenty-five years later two ladies were in my store buying shoes when one of them asked what size they were. When I told her, the older of the two laughed. I asked her the reason for her smiles and she told me she could never go into a shoe store without thinking of an incident that took place years ago, when she sat in a church and heard a young fellow tell of losing a job as shoe salesman, because he wouldn't lie about the size of a pair of shoes.

"Do you remember the name of that fellow?" I asked.

"No. I have often wished that I knew because I'm anxious to know what ever happened to that fellow."

I got a real thrill out of asking her a few questions regarding that fellow, what he looked like, etc. So at last I bluntly said: "Would you like to meet him?"

"I sure would, because I am anxious to know just what God would do with a fellow like that."

"Well, madam, here he is, shake hands."

This elderly and saintly looking lady looked at me in astonishment for a moment, more so possibly because she had been my customer for many years, and then, forgetting the other people in the store she removed her glasses, knelt down at the chair and as she wiped her tears she poured out her heart to God in thanksgiving.

"Lord God, You know I have prayed for this man every day since I heard his testimony and you have heard that prayer. You have blessed him even more than I dared to pray for. Here he has two fine stores, a nice family and home and he is happy in the service of the King. It really pays to be a Christian."

My friends, here was one of God's saints who had interceded for me and God had answered her prayer.

Let me tell you something. Suppose that there were no hell to shun or Heaven to gain. Assuming that the grave ended it all, I still maintain that the best life to live is that of a Christian, because Christ pays well here, as well as hereafter.

The devil mistreats his own here and torments them in the hereafter. Christ blesses His followers here and is preparing mansions in glory for them when traveling days are over.

**“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”**

It pays every time!

**~ end of chapter 1 ~**

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