

GOOD NEWS

A Collection of Sermons

by

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SERMON TWO

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS

(Evening service at Chicago Avenue Church)

Brethren: We invite your attention this evening to the first and second verses of the first Psalm:

“Blessed be the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate day and night.”

These psalms are an interesting study to any man. I like to read Dickens and Thackeray and Bulwer and Shakespeare, because they give me such a deep insight into human nature.

A man may study the pages of such books as these to advantage, but there is more for me in these one hundred and fifty psalms than perhaps the writings of all these masters. These men I have named give me human nature simon pure, as we would say if we were standing on the street or in your store. But David gives us human nature as it is acted upon, influenced by the Divine nature. I never have much to say against human nature. I have very little abuse for man in his normal state. I preached to the colored people frequently in my State, and on one occasion when I was preaching to

THE COLORED BRETHERN

and after I was through the colored preacher got up and said: “ Breddern, dar was a trufe struck my mind while the preacher was a-preaching, and I believe it’s true ‘fore God. I believe dat man is wuss now dan he war when he war born,” and brethren, I think it was the most self-evident proposition I ever heard stated in my life. It is perverted human nature I fight.

It is the perversion of hand and foot and tongue and mind that I pronounce all the maledictions of my nature upon; but I have very little to say about human nature in any of its normal and right attitudes.

David gives me human nature as it is acted upon and influenced in the best sense, and in the best way. I love to read David, because, in the first place, David knew what he was talking about. I love to hear a man talking that seems to know what he is talking about.

I've heard men trying to explain a great many things they didn't understand themselves, and I've heard men discussing subjects they didn't seem to know anything about themselves. I love to read David, because he seems to know what he is talking about. No man before him knew more of God and more of humanity than David, and the best preacher that ever planted his foot in Chicago is the preacher who knows

THE MOST ABOUT GOD

And the most about humanity. He gets between the two, and every preacher ought to know God, and lay his hands on the shoulder of his living father in heaven, and then put the other arm around the race, and try to lift humanity up to God. This was David.

Now with the broad views of the Psalmist, a man who had studied life in all its phases, a man who seemed to understand God as no man before him, and very few after him; a man who seemed to understand himself and understand human nature — that man gives us the result of his study.

He gives us the conclusion he had reached in these words, "**Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,**" as much as to say, "If you want to be a happy man" — and all men want to be happy — "if you really are in search of happiness listen to this prescription:

"Blessed and happy you will be
If you walk not in the counsel of the ungodly."

An ungodly man may be a very moral man; an ungodly man need not swear, or drink, or violate the Sabbath, or commit any of the flagrant sins which men are so often guilty of. An ungodly man means simply an ungodlike man. Ungodliness and ungodlikeness are synonymous — they mean the same thing. What does ungodly mean? We say it is a man who is not acquainted with God, and God's ways.

EVERY MAN IN CHICAGO

Who knows God loves God, and every man in Chicago who don't know God don't love Him. It is just as natural for a soul that knows God to love God as it is for a mother to love her babe, or as it is for a father to love his son.

An ungodly man is a man who cares nothing about God. He is moral in a great many senses; he don't drink, he pays his debts, and walks uprightly in a thousand ways; but I'll tell you the distinguishing characteristic of that sort of a man is that he loves to talk and give advice to people.

You know him, don't you? Old Colonel So-and-so, old Judge So-and-so, old Major So-and-so, old General So-and-so — you've seen them, haven't you? They don't belong to the church — don't make any professions of religion. They scoff at the idea that anybody ever died for them, but they are all right, and they give more advice, and practice less of it than any tribe in creation.

The old Colonel says, “I don’t see any use in all these meetings; I can be as good and not go to church as I can be and go. I can be as good and stay at home as I can to be running to church so much. I don’t see any harm in a social game of cards — never could in my life. It is not a sinful game — it’s a scientific game.”

And, brethren, whenever a man wants to be a first-class sinner he always rings in

THAT WORD “SCIENCE”

Somehow or somewhere along the line. “It’s a scientific game.” If he wants to dance he says: “Why, what in the world harm is there in dancing?” The way to tell an ungodly man is that he is always talking about what harm is there in this, that, or the other thing, and the way to tell a godly man is, he is always hunting around for something with good in it, and not going about trying to find something that people can see no harm in at all.

If there is no harm in cards at all, why I haven’t got the time to play cards, and I am sorry for any man that professes to be a true man that has time to play cards; I am sorry for the woman who has time to play cards, and I am sorry for the man and woman that has time to dance. I tell you, brethren, when I look around me and see a sinking world and humanity drifting off from God, and so many sick beds to visit, and see so many that are needy and need sympathy and help, I am not one to look about me, for God knows I tell the truth when I say I haven’t seen the day in thirteen years past that I had a minute to spare to give to these things, and you wouldn’t either if you were any account. You can put that down!

You might just as well be at that, as far as you are personally concerned, as to be at anything else, for if you weren’t at that you’d be asleep, and about all the time you’re awake you’re hunting for something to do and read that will amuse you: and the only difference between you awake and asleep, as far as we are concerned, is, that you’re a little more quiet when you’re asleep than when you’re awake — that is if you ain’t one of that snoring tribe.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.”

In other words, if you want to be happy in this life don’t take counsel or advice from ungodly men. Don’t do that! When you are lost as to any moral problem, go to the best man or the best woman you know in the world for your advice, for they’re the only ones capable of advising you. I want a man first to practice what he preaches, and show me it is good to do it, and then tell me how he did it, and then I want to do just like him. An ungodly man! As I said before, you can hardly pick a flaw in him; he never goes far enough to be dubbed immoral. What’s the difference between an immoral sinner and a moral sinner? Well, it’s just the difference between the typhoid fever and the small-pox. That’s the only difference at all. One’s internal, and the other is external, but both will kill

NINE TIMES IN TEN

If it is not cared for.

Our Saviour used to look at your sort, and drop His finger on your sort and say, ‘**You whitened sepulcher, beautiful without, but within you are full of rottenness and dead men’s bones;**’ and if you’ll translate that into nineteenth century language it means:

“You whitewashed rascals you!” That’s what you are!

Rub the whitewash off him in spots, and he’s the most deformed, ungodly wretch you ever saw in your life. Haven’t you seen it scale off, brethren? An ungodly man “can’t see any harm in anything.” Like the Irishman down in our town, he was a devout member of his church, but he was a very profane fellow, and a man said to ‘him one day, “Jack, how can you be called a devout member of your church and swear and cuss like you do?” and Jack said: “Faith, sir, and there is no harm in cussing unless you make harm out of it.”

Got the idea, brethren? I am not hunting those things that have no harm in them, but I’m hunting the things that have good in them, and so are all good men under all circumstances. They ain’t inquiring whether there is much or little harm in this, that, and the other thing. If you want to be happy, brethren, don’t take the advice or counsel of the ungodly, or of those men who run on that line of things. They’ll

GET YOU INTO TROUBLE

Sooner or later, sure. Take your advice, your counsel, from the best man or woman this earth has ever seen. Take the question of theater-going, and nine-tenths of these ungodly people in the church and out, you’ll find go to the theaters. Let’s raise that question a little while here.

One of your Chicago preachers told me in St. Louis, that during his pastorate in that city, I believe, there was a young lady, a bright young lady, teacher in one of the schools, came to him during his revival. Her conscience was stirred, and she walked up to him and said, “I want to be a Christian. I want to join your church, but you object to theater-going, and I can’t see any harm in that in the world.”

The pastor said to her “Sister, give your heart to God, join the church and go to the theater as much as you please.”

Brethren, I believe I’d go to the theater every time I wanted to go, but thank God, since I joined the church I never wanted to go. Don’t you see? I never got down that low in my religious experience from the day I gave my heart to God to this minute, and whenever I do “I’m going back,” as the old brother said, “to the old stump and git it over again, as my first stock is about played out.” Well, the pastor said this young lady:

GAVE HER HEART

to God, joined the church, and he heard after that that the young lady went to the theater. Next summer the revival started again, and this young lady came into the church and took a class in the Sunday-school and tried to live right.

One day during the revival one of this young lady's pupils who had come up as a penitent, came to her and said, "Miss So-and-so, do you go to the theater?" and she said, "Yes; I go occasionally."

The pupil then asked, "Do you think it is right as a Christian to go to the theater?"

"Well," said the teacher, "I don't know."

And the pupil asked again, "Miss So-and-so, if you can go as a Christian, can I go as a penitent?"

And the young lady said, "I looked that sweet girl in the face, and said, 'Darling, I'll never put my foot inside another theater, God helping me, as long as I live,'" and she said afterward to the pastor, "My liberty as a Christian was costing that girl her soul, and I said, 'My liberty shall never do that,' and I gave up the thing that was leading a soul off from God."

That's the way a Christian will settle that question every time. My liberty and license in these things shall never cost a human being his soul. "No harm in this and that and the other" they say. Lord cure us of this abominable way of talking about "what harm is there in this," and put us to hunting the things we don't have to ask that question about.

They ask, "Is there any harm in dancing, theaters, in this, that, and the other thing?" but nobody has ever asked me, "Is there any harm in family prayer?"

Never! They never asked me if I thought there was any harm in reading the Bible. They never asked me if I thought there was any harm in praying weekly for God's grace and help. Do you want to know why? Because they knew there was no harm in it! Why did they ask me the other question? Because they knew there was harm in it, and that settles the whole question.

"The counsel of the ungodly! Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."

When a man gets to listening to bad advice the next thing he is going to do is to stand in

THE WAY OF SINNERS

I've heard preachers say standing in the way of sinners meant to get ahead of them, and not let them get by into the kingdom. There isn't such a thought contained anywhere in this expression. Standing in the way of sinners means keeping the company of sinners, and a man isn't going to listen to bad advice long before he'll be with sinners. I don't care whose boy, or wife, or child you are, you cannot stand the pressure of bad company.

Now, when a man gets so he will listen to bad advice, the next thing you hear from him he is in bad company. Bad company. We need to inform ourselves in this question of company. There isn't an angel in heaven that can keep the company some of you do and be pure.

Above everything in the universe a man ought to be choice about his company and about his books. If you will show me the company you keep, I will write your biography ten years ahead of your death, and I will not miss the mark one time in ten. All I want to know of any man or any boy is what sort of company does he keep. **“Evil communications corrupt good morals.”** “Birds of a feather flock together.”

I will tell you another thing. There is but one safe rule in this line. Don't you ever go with anybody that will say things you won't, that will do things you won't do. You won't run with them long until you will be

DOING THOSE THINGS

And saying those things yourself. Always hunt better company than you are, and when some of us get up to ourselves we are with the biggest rascal in town right then. And that gets things in a bad shape, don't it? I am sorry for a fellow that every time he goes off by himself he is in the worst company he was ever in in his life. I will illustrate that for you.

There was a very stingy man I heard of once — very scarce, you know, but occasionally you will run across a stingy man. Well, we run across one down in our country.

His wife was a Methodist, and he would go with his wife to church, but he never would pay a dime toward the support of the church — he was very close — and one summer he professed religion and joined the church himself. Well, shortly after he joined the church the steward went over to his house and spoke to him kindly and told him: “Our preacher is scarce now of provisions, and I come over to see if I could get some meat from you for the preacher.” He had a smoke-house full, and he thought a minute: “Why,” said he, “certainly I will give the preacher some meat.” He went out to his smoke-house; the steward sat in the window; he walked out to the smoke-house, unlocked the door, got a big, fine ham down, brought it about half way back toward the house, and stopped and

LAID IT DOWN

in the path, looked at it a minute, and turned around and walked back to the smoke-house, got another and come and laid it down, and he stood and looked at it a minute, turned right around to the smoke-house and got another and come and laid it down, and the steward was watching him, and he looked down at the three hams. He says: “If you don't shut your mouth, you old stingy devil, you, I will go and give him all there is in the smoke-house.”

The devil was in him, the devil was in him, and the devil told him every time: “You going to give away that ham.” “Are you going to give away that ham?” And just kept after him, and he tried to hush the devil's mouth by putting in one ham at a time, but finally he silenced him when he said: “If you don't hush your mouth I will give him every ham in the smoke-house.”

And the devil hushed then. And a man can be in bad company when he is by himself. “Bad company will ruin you.”

Above all things we ought to be careful about the association of our children. If that neighbor of yours is worth fifty or seventy-five, or a hundred thousand dollars, he may have the worst children in the town, and yet you will let those children of his come over there

AND RUIN YOURS

Because he has got a little money. Did you ever notice that streak of human nature? If that neighbor's son of yours is the worst debauched young man in the town, and yet he drives a fine horse and buggy in the streets of this city and he belongs to one of the fashionable clubs — and, God bless you, that is all I want to know about any man, and it is a question of time when he will be drowned in debauchery and ruin — is he a member of a city club?

I have preached in different cities and I have worked with all my might, and I have preached to hundreds and thousands of people; I have seen thousands converted in different cities, but I never have yet, as God is my judge, known of any member of a city club ever being converted to God, and that is the saddest commentary that God or man could pronounce on those institutions.

Just as soon as one of them becomes impressed with the gospel and he goes back into his company they ridicule him, and deride him, and laugh him out of his impression.

A man is almost as certainly doomed as he will ever be damned when he goes into those institutions. Bad company — and I have nothing worse to say of clubs than the fact that in all my ministry I never have seen a member of a club give his heart to God, join the church. And I don't care if you are as pious as Job, if you will join one of those clubs and begin to

RUN WITH THEM

I would swap chances with Judas Iscariot if I was you for a hope of heaven.

I am determined to be understood, you see, and you all can disagree with me if you want to; but you shan't run away from here and say: 'I will declare, I didn't understand that fellow. You shan't say that. I am going to make you see what I am talking about. Company.

A young man can move out in this town who has got \$20,000 or \$100,000 in his own right, and he drives around here in style and smokes the finest Havana cigars and drinks the finest wines, and he can debauch himself all the week in his drunkenness and spreeing, and Saturday night he can spend the whole night in a shameless place, and Sunday evening he is dressed up, perfumed up, and sitting in the parlor with one of the nicest young ladies in this city. I will tell you what we need. We need some daddies in this country that will just meet those young bucks at the front door and kick 'em clear over into the street.

Some one said: "If I could mother the world I could save the world;" but if in this sense I could

FATHER THE WORLD

I could come nigher to saving the world.

Down in one of our towns down South there was a whole lot of girls got together there, and agreed between one another that they would marry the drunken boys of the town and reform them. They marry them, you know, and reform them. And now there are more little old whippoorwill widows going around that town than in any place I ever saw. A little idiot. I say a young lady, a girl, or a grown woman that will marry a man with his breath tainted with whisky is the biggest fool this world ever looked in the face of.

“Nor standeth in the way of sinners.”

Keep out of that company.

You recollect the young lady who said: “Father, may I go to the ball to-night?” at a certain place.

“No, daughter; I don’t want you to go.” “Why, father?”

“Well, daughter, I don’t like the company you will be in.”

“Well,” she said, “father, I know all of them are not good that will be there, but,” she said, “I am not afraid of their hurting me.”

About that time there was a dead coal lying upon the hearth. He said: “Daughter, what is that?”

She said, “A dead coal.”

He said, “Pick it up.” She picked it up in her fingers, and he said, “Does it burn you?” “No sir.”

“Well, THROW IT DOWN.”

She threw it down, and he said, “Daughter, what is that on your fingers.” “ She said, “It is smut.”

“Well, daughter, remember when you go into bad company if they don’t burn you they will smut you every time, every time; you can’t dodge it, you can’t dodge it.”

Oh, mothers, look to the company of your children. Fathers, look to the company of your young men, your young sons. And I say to you to-night, whenever it becomes a known fact that my daughters keep company with dissipated young men, and my sons have gone out into bad company, I shall lose all hope for the future of my children. Oh!, stand by your children and protect them.

“Nor stand in the way of sinners.”

Boys, listen to me, you beardless boys. You never can get higher than the company you keep. Listen, boys. If you would be noble and true, seek the best atmosphere of earth, and live in it forever. **“Nor stand in the way of sinners.”**

Now, he said, “Nor **sit in the seat of the scornful.**”

Now, brethren, we notice first he is walking along, walking along in the counsel of the ungodly. Now you see that posture, that attitude, walking along in the counsel of the ungodly. Well, now, when a man is walking along this way he can

TURN TO THE RIGHT

or turn to the left by the movements of one set of muscles; but you let him stand right still and he has got to move every muscle in his body to get off; and then let him sit down and nine times in ten he is there to stay.

Walking along in your youthful days, God’s minister used to come and impress you and move you and turn you, and by and by you got to standing, you got into a standing posture, and now the thunders of worlds cannot shake you or turn you. Some of you have reached the last stage, the ante-room to hell, and that is sitting in the seat of the scornful.

God pity a poor wretch that went through bad counsel into bad company, until finally he is sitting down in the seat of the scornful, where he can laugh at the preacher and make fun of God and scorn the Bible.

I will tell you, among other things, what has done a great deal of harm in Chicago: these opera-houses and other places filling up to hear such men as Bob Ingersoll lecture. I have said it before, and I can say it in Chicago, where I understand he is a very popular lecturer. If I had a dog, and he would jump out of my yard at night and go and hear Bob Ingersoll blaspheme the name of God, if he ever got over in my yard again I would

FILL HIM WITH BUCKSHOT

He should eat no more of my meat and bread and sleep under my house no longer.

“**Sitting in the seat of the scornful.**”

A man going and sitting in the presence of the scornful and hearing the God that made him scorned and scoffed, and stand there or sit there to see Bob Ingersoll chip the words off his mother’s tombstone, “**I am the Resurrection and the Life!**”

To see Bob Ingersoll as he demolishes the forces and the powers of Christianity so far as he is able to do it! Thank God Almighty! I never had a man closer than a forty-fifth cousin of mine that had ever had that sort of idea of life that would force him to go and pay a dollar and sit down and hear the like of that. And the difference between you and Bob Ingersoll is, he gets a thousand dollars a night for his infidelity, and you go there and sit and listen to him like a fool for nothing, and a dollar to go in there and hear him. Who wouldn’t be a sort of an infidel a while at a rate of one thousand dollars a night? And you get so you won’t pay old Bob one thousand dollars and he is done. Hear that? It is so much a head.

Bob can make five hundred dollars a night lecturing that there is no God, but if you paid him on the other side and let him lecture that there is a God, he couldn't make ten dollars a night to save his life.

You see there is four hundred and ninety dollars difference in his propositions, and old Bob is after the dollars. I know that by the way he treated that infidel convention. He was to lecture and give them the profits, and they said he gave them the lecture and he took the profits. They say that is the way the thing wound up.

“Nor sit in the seat of the scornful.”

“Nor sit in the seat of the scornful.”

A man never gets over the fact that he has taken such an attitude toward God, **“But his delight is in the law of the Lord.”**

I tell you, brother, when you get to where you will like this Book, and read this Book, ah; you are laying a foundation then. Young, boys, take this Book; let your delight be in the counsel, in the law of the Lord.

I never think what this Bible is to a man but what I think of a little boy — he was the good boy in the town, and all the boys recognized him as a good, upright boy. And they laid their traps to get him drunk; they fixed their plans. They sent one of the shrewdest of the bad boys to him, and he met him on the street, and he says, “Johnny, come into the grocery and let us have a mint julep.”

Johnny says, “O, no, I can't go in there.” “Well, why?”

“Well, my Book says, **‘Look not upon the wine when it is red.’**”

“Oh,” he says, “I know the Book says that, but come in and take one drink.”

“Well,” he says, “I can't do it.” “Well, why.”

“Because my Book says, **‘At last it biteth like an adder and stingeth like a serpent.’**”

“Oh,” he says, “I know the Bible says that, but come in and take one drink.”

“No,” he says, “My Bible says, **‘when a sinner enticeth thee, sin thou not.’**”

And the bad boy turned off and left him and went over to his companions, and they said, “Did you see him?” “Yes.”

“Did you get him to drink?”

“No: couldn't get him in the grocery.” “Well, why?”

He says, “That boy was just as chuck full of Bible as he could be, and I couldn’t do a thing with him.”

Ah, brother, but “**his delight is in the law of the Lord.**”

Now, my congregation let me say to you in conclusion — after the discussion make the application — let me say to you, the germ of happiness that may spring up and be a tree under which, you can sit in its shade and eat its fruits — listen — these texts, these two verses, these furnish the secret of a happy life to you.

Then I beg you:

- Don’t walk in the counsel of the ungodly!
- Don’t stand in the way of sinners!
- Don’t sit in the seat of the scornful!

But take the Book of God, make it your counsel, give yourself to the right, and live and die for God.

Now, I have talked forty minutes. We are going to hold

AN AFTER-SERVICE

in this room to-night. While we sing — we are going to stand and sing; and all of you that want to go, you go, and all you that want to stay, you stay. If there is a man here to-night that is hunting something better than he has ever enjoyed, you stay here. If you have got all you want, go. Now, you do as you please; if you’d rather go home, you go. We are going to hold an after-service of ten or fifteen minutes, and you can sit and enjoy it with us or you can go, just as you please. We will stand and sing. Pray for him who shall preach to you. Now, in this after-service, if you want to remain, do so, if you do not, you can go. We will stand and sing and give you all time to retire that want to go.

~ end of sermon 2 ~

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