

A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers
Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings, Held
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FOURTEEN -

THE SUPREME OFFERING TO CHRIST

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

A series of daily, special meetings, such as these now in progress, are vitally important for GOD's people - for those who are already Christians. Such meetings are preeminently worth while, indeed, are altogether necessary now and then, for GOD's own people, for it is easy for Christians to drift, and to have their habits in the Christian life broken, and to go down life's stream, failing to give worthy testimony for CHRIST, and at the same time missing the peace and the power which ought to be in the Christian life.

Meetings like these are often necessary for Christians, to summon us, to challenge us, to bring us back where we shall have our spiritual strength renewed and made deeper and larger. But we should not be content, as Christians, that the meetings shall be limited to that. We should look about ourselves daily, and give ourselves to serious thought and service for others. We should put forth our efforts in the most thoughtful and diligent way to help those about us who are not Christians.

What opportunities we have in a modern city like this - what opportunities to help daily those who are not Christians! Most of the men and women before me this Tuesday noon, I take it, are Christian men and women. My heart would be profoundly warmed, if I could believe and be assured that every Christian here to-day would do his or her best to-day and to-morrow, and from day to day to help those about you who are not Christians. You should not neglect anybody. The humblest, the poorest, the lowest, the tallest man in town should each be spoken to, in the proper fashion, concerning his personal relations to GOD. The woman most needy, the most neglected, the most capable, the most devoted to the social world, should each be appealed to, and every such life sought for the side and service of JESUS.

Do I raise an unreasonable question when I raise the question if every Christian before me cannot and will not make it a point to bring with you to-night to the big tent, a group of people

who are not Christians? And if it could not be a group, couldn't you find one person, and when you find that person, and bring that person with you, probably sitting beside him or her - that can be determined in each case, as may be deemed best - pray as you bring such person, that the preacher may speak what and as he ought to speak to help that person?

We are not to get away from that scriptural truth that "**faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.**"

I ask it most earnestly, my fellow Christians, if you will not, all and each, make it a point to bring with you to-night a group of people, or, if not a group, then one person not a Christian, to the daily services? How delighted we are to see these great throngs of Christians at the public services, the largest proportion of Christians, I think, that I ever saw in public services! But how deeply desirous we are that the Christians shall bring :with them from service to service those that are not Christians! How we long to help them!

We would do them good, and not evil at all. "**And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and forever.**" Pay the price, I pray you, to be personal soul winners.

THE SUPREME OFFERING TO CHRIST

Text: "**Amasiah who willingly offered himself unto the Lord.**"- II Chronicles 17:16

And now, as I come to speak this morning, I wonder, as I look over this throng, just how much every life here means to the world. would you have your life to count for the highest and the best? Then such life cannot count for the highest and best if it be not yielded to the guidance and Mastership of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. There is a sentence in the Bible that points this truth for us, to which our attention is to be directed to-day: "**Amasiah, who willingly offered himself unto the Lord.**"

You ask, Who was Amasiah? If you will read the context, you will see that he was the chief officer in the reign of good King Jehoshaphat. Next to the king himself, this man Amasiah was the first man of the kingdom. So important was he that 200,000 picked men were put under his command, and Amasiah stood next to the king in position. Now, this important man, situated in this eminent place, "**willingly offered himself unto the Lord.**"

It is a glorious thing when men and women of leadership are pronounced and positive friends of the Lord. It is a glorious thing when the outstanding lawyer is the modest, faithful friend of CHRIST; and the skillful doctor, who has such an opportunity to bless the world; and the patient teacher, who occupies such an eminent place of responsibility and opportunity; and the alert editor, likewise strategically situated for wielding the most tremendous and commanding influence; and the aggressive business man, with people under him, whom he directs; and on and on, in all realms.

What a glorious thing when people in position of leadership, as was this man Amasiah, make it a point to be pronounced friends of GOD! For the most serious thing in all the world, my men and women, is this matter of personal influence. The most significant thing about life is for life to be

positionized properly, and the most tragical thing about life is for life to be positionized wrongly. Day in and day out, by the quiet emanation of our influence, we are taking people up, or we are dragging people down. Glorious then is it, beyond words, when a man or a woman is the known, positive, faithful friend of CHRIST!

Let the example of this man Amasiah teach us to-day.

There are two or three simple, but greatly important lessons in his story, that we may well study, this morning.

First, Amasiah put GOD's cause as the first thing in his life. Surely, that was right. Where should he have put it? Where should the men and women before me this Tuesday noon put GOD's cause? We must put it somewhere. We must give it some place. We do give it some place. Where should we put GOD's cause, in our personal, every-day life? Now, we take often the most superficial view, as we face that question.

I saw a symposium a little while ago in one of the clever magazines, where answers were given to the question: "What is the great need for the church to-day?"

The answers given to that question were ludicrous, for the most part, if the matters talked about had not been so serious.

One gave as his answer: "The great need for the church, to-day, is *that it shall have larger numbers*."

Surely, he missed it widely. Never one time does GOD put the emphasis on numbers. Indeed, we are distinctly warned in the Bible, both by direct statement and by implication, concerning the snare that there is in numbers.

David of old took the census of the kingdoms of Israel and Judea, and plunged the nations into the direst disaster, because while taking his census, he and his people took their eyes away from GOD, and down the people went into the ditch of disaster:

- It is not how many we count that tells, but how much do we weigh?
- It is not quantity that tells, but quality.
- It is not duration that tells, but intensity.

Once when Henry Drummond was holding an institute for a group of Christian men, following his address he gave a quiz for the men, and presently one of them asked:

"Mr. Drummond, isn't the first need of Christianity to-day that it shall have more men behind it?"

And quick as a flash the keen man made answer: "No, not more men, but a better brand." JESUS cannot command big situations with little people. I dare to affirm to-day that JESUS is not of all hindered by little people, and, therefore, there comes the ringing challenge of the Bible: "**Quit you like men**" - not like fops, not like dandies, not like prigs - "**quit you like men**." JESUS waits for the strength, the robustness, the masculinity, the power, the personality of men laid on

His altar, to win victories that shall shake the world.

Then, in that same symposium to which I have referred, one made answer that the great need for CHRIST's cause is *that it should have more money*.

That answer is as wide of the mark as is the first.

Nowhere in the Bible does the emphasis fall upon money as the chief requisite for the triumph of GOD's cause. Money is a powerful factor everywhere, in religion as well as in the daily affairs of men. I have no sympathy at all with that outcry that is sometimes heard against money, against men who make money, against men who have money. It is the cry of the thoughtless, and sometimes of the anarchist, and for it I have no sympathy.

A man who can make money ought to make it, legitimately, to be sure, honestly, rising early in the morning and toiling late at night. But as men make money, they are to remember that challenging word spoken by Moses, when he said: "**But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth Thee power to get wealth.**"

We are to remember that money is to be a servant, and not to be our Master at all. I can quite well understand how a certain rich woman in the country felt awhile ago, when she lay a-dying, and at last, piteously appealed to the physician to know if that were death that she was then facing, and had his answer that it was.

Then, seeking to draw the covering about her face, some who were present said that over and over again the rich, self-centered woman wailed out her cry: "Oh, how I dread to meet GOD when I remember how I have trifled with my money!" And well she might, for she must answer at GOD's judgment bar for every dime that she has had.

Do not be deceived - money is not the first thing in the kingdom of GOD!

It is often an unmitigated curse, the lust for which turns many from the better way, and pierces them through with many sorrows.

What is the first thing for the triumph at the kingdom of GOD? It is pointed here in the case of this man Amasiah.

He put GOD's cause as the first thing in his life. He crowned his life by putting GOD's. cause therein as supreme. It was the same kingly word said by JESUS long afterward, when He preached His great sermon, saying: "**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things**" - bread and meat and sufficient to wear - "**shall be added unto you.**" "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.**"

"**Seek ye first**"

- not secondly,
- not thirdly,
- not incidentally,

- not partially,
- not optionally,
- not in subordinate fashion;

Put "**first**" the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness, and then you can go afield anywhere, absolutely assured that the best thing is going to come to you.

Later along, that incomparable Paul illustrated the same truth, when he said: "**To me to live is Christ.**" Or, freely translated, he said: "For me to live is for CHRIST to live over again." "That is to say," said Paul, "in my own little life, the best I can, I am to reincarnate the spirit and teachings and purposes of CHRIST, and to live literally for Him."

"I am not my own at all," said Paul. "I am CHRIST's. I belong to Him by a threefold claim. He created me, and then He died for me, and then He preserves me, and I belong to Him by that threefold claim."

"My brain is not mine," said Paul; "it is CHRIST's. Let me mind what I do with CHRIST's brain.

- My hands are not mine; they are CHRIST's.
- My feet are not mine; CHRIST bought them with His blood. Let me mind where I take CHRIST's feet.
- My heart is not mine, but CHRIST's. Let me mind what I love with CHRIST's heart.
- My life is not mine, but CHRIST's. Let me see to it that I take CHRIST's life and put it where, and live it as CHRIST's life ought to be lived."

Now this man Amasiah points that grandly telling lesson for us, and he did it in what we call a secular calling: He did it yonder in the army, and if there is a difficult: place, I should judge, for men to stand up and be foursquare for GOD, it would be in the army. And yet there, this strong man put GOD's cause first - there in the army - which leads me to say that the distinction that we sometimes seek to make between what we call the "sacred and the secular" is an improper distinction.

There can be no secularities in the right kind of a Christian life.

You are just as much called to be the right kind of a Christian here on Tuesday, as you are yonder, Sunday morning, in the house of GOD, with the hymn book in your hand, lustily singing praises to His name. And I will dare to affirm that if Christian men and women are going to be more careful and conscientious at one place than another, then out in the market place, in the shops and factories and stores, in the court house, in the busy marts of trade, in the circles where men constantly touch elbows with the world, let them there see to it that they are the right kind of Christians. If they are going to make a difference anywhere, let the better way have pre-eminence out there, as they touch elbows with the world.

I see glimpses, I think, of that glorious day coming when GOD's men and women will, out in the big world, shine there for CHRIST and witness there for CHRIST, so that daily their lives shall have increasingly winning power over the world about them.

Some years ago it was my privilege to speak for ten days in another state, in one of the largest and noblest of our American churches.

In such congregation was the leading shoe man of the world, who was also a devout Christian. Morning by morning, and night by night, he was faithfully in his place in the meetings.

One day as we were going away I asked him: "If you should put your life passion in one sentence, what would that sentence be?"

He smiled and said: "If you had come to my office, like I have asked you, you would know, for I have it there in my office on a cardboard. You had better come over and find out."

I went on with him, and presently we were there in his office.

There was his life passion, on the cardboard, in six little words. Some of these business men have, perhaps, been in his office and have seen them. Six little words voiced his life passion. If you have been there, you will recall them. Here they are: "GOD first. Family second. Shoes third."

That is exactly right. You put it any other way, and you will make trouble. That arrangement is exactly right: "God first. Family second. Business third."

GOD first, before Father and mother and dearest loved ones. GOD first, before man's business, certainly. Making a living is a mere incident. Making a life is what we are in the world for. GOD first, our family second, and then our daily task third.

An interesting story is told of one of the great pork packers of the Northwest.

One was introduced to him one day and did not quite understand who he was, and asked him at once: "What is your business?"

The big packer made answer, with modest face: "I am a Christian, sir. That is my business."

The man questioning him reddened a little in the face and said: "You did not understand. What is your daily work? What is your main concern?"

And the packer made answer, with his own face reddening, because he was modest, and said:

"My business, sir, is to be a Christian, but I pack pork, sir, to pay the expenses."

Oh, men and women before me, our business in this world and life of ours is to be the right kind of friends for CHRIST. That is our one, supreme business.

Amasiah points that lesson for us.

Amasiah points a second lesson, to which your attention is briefly directed.

Our text says: "**Amasiah willingly offered himself unto the Lord.**"

Note that carefully.

See what this man Amasiah offered his Lord: "**Amasiah willingly offered himself**" - **himself** - to the Lord. And that is the supreme gift. The highest contribution that any man or woman can make to this needy world is to live in it the right kind of a life.

One Savonarola turned the tides of wicked Florence.

The people said of John Chrysostom, that glorious preacher in Constantinople: "It were better for the sun to cease his shining than for John Chrysostom to cease his preaching."

This man Amasiah gave his life to the Lord. *Now, there is the crux of the whole matter of living the Christian life.*

I go every year to the cattlemen of the West, to their annual camp meeting, and have been thus going to them, for a week every year, for fifteen years.

The most interesting week I ever live, in some respects, is that week; and among the most interesting men - the biggest, the finest, in many respects, that I have ever touched, are those stalwart men.

Sometime ago, when I was out there, I preached to those men, some 1200, hidden away in a cliff of the mountains, one morning, on the text: "**Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.**"

One of those big fellows who heard that day had not been a Christian long. When the service was over he locked his arm in mine and said: "Let's go for a walk. I have something serious to say to you."

We went up the canyon, about a mile and a quarter away from the camp. After we started, he did not say another word for quite awhile.

His great chest rose and fell, as if some seething furnace were beneath it, as, indeed there was. I waited for him to speak; I did not venture to question him at all. When we were a mile and a quarter away from the camp, behind a large ledge of rock, he turned and faced me, and said:

I want you to pray a dedicatory prayer for me."

"What do you wish to dedicate?" I asked.

Slowly he began to talk, and the tears began to stream from his eyes, and he said: "I did not know until this morning that all these thousands of cattle that I have called mine are not mine at all, but everyone belongs to CHRIST. I did not know until this morning that all these miles and miles of lands over which my cattle have browsed are not mine at all, but that every acre belongs to CHRIST. You see, I have not been a Christian long, and I do not know much about the

Christian life. I have learned to-day, as never before, what the Christian life means. Now I see that every hoof of all these thousands of cattle belongs to CHRIST, and every acre of all these lands over which they browse belongs to CHRIST, and I want to take my true place in GOD's cause.

I want you to tell GOD for me that I will be His trustee from this day on. I will be His administrator on His estate. I will try to live from now on like such an administrator ought to live. And when you finish telling Him that for me, you wait. I have got something to tell Him myself."

We knelt there behind the rock, like two children, and I said: "Master, this man bids me tell Thee thus and so, thus and so." And he assented and consented, while I spoke the sentences to GOD. When I had finished I waited, and he put his face down to the ground and sobbed.

I waited and waited, and on and on he sobbed, and presently he gasped out his prayer. It was this:

"And now, Master," he said, "am I not in a position to give you my bad boy? His mother and I seem to have no influence at all over him, but I have given you my property to-day, and I will henceforth be your administrator on your estate, and now won't you take my boy in the same way, and save him, and save him soon, for your glory?"

We went back to the camp, and the day wore to evening, and I stood up again to preach to the men.

Nor had I spoken fifteen minutes until that wild son, on the outskirts of that crowd, stood up before us all, came toward his Father sitting there at the front, and as he came and as we looked, he said: "Papa, I cannot wait until that man is done his sermon. I have decided for CHRIST!"

And this Scripture, that hour, was plain to our hearts: "**Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give Thee the desires of thine heart.**"

Oh, what power a man has with GOD, when such man comes to CHRIST and says to Him: "You can get me for any field, for any journey, for any task, for any duty that you wish. Master, I am yours - to go and to say and to be and to do, just as thou wilt."

What a power he has in the world!

Notice the text again: "Amasiah offered himself willingly."

There was no coercion, no conscription, no drilling. He offered himself willingly to the Lord. Oh, men, my brothers! Oh, women, my sisters! What a glorious thing for men and women to rise up and say, without being coaxed and coerced and compelled and drafted and conscripted: "CHRIST can get my best, and I am going to give Him my best!" What a power that man or that woman is! What a power!

One of two factors dominates every life. Either self is the dominating factor in life, or GOD.

Mark it! The self-centered life is doomed. No matter how brilliant, how clever, how powerful, how achieving, the self-centered life is doomed.

That is true of a nation. The self-centered. nation is going on the rocks.

That is true of an organization. The self-centered organization will finally collapse and be doomed.

That is true of a family. No matter how clever and brilliant and influential, if such family be self-centered, the day of its doom comes on. Even as doom came to Lot's family, the self-centered home is doomed, no matter how brilliant.

The imperial Gladstone was probably right when he said: "Napoleon had the keenest brain that was ever packed into a human skull." And yet Napoleon died like a dog in the ditch, after he had made Europe cower and cringe and tremble before him.

Why? He was self-centered in life from first to last.

What did he care to walk with cruel foot over the heart of his beautiful Josephine? What did he care to sacrifice a hundred thousand soldiers, if only he could carry out his self-centered and fiendish ambition?

The self-centered life is doomed. No matter what the calling, the position, the power, the self-centered life is doomed.

But the life linked with CHRIST, the life that says "Yes" to CHRIST, the life that says: "Thou, oh, CHRIST, canst have thy way with me. Thy plan I wish. Thy program I accept. The road thou wouldst have me travel, make it plain to me and I will take it" - that is the life victorious. That is the life that wins. That is the life of glorious conquest on any field.

Before you leave this hall to-day, let me ask you, my men and women, if you have fully settled it that you want CHRIST's will brought to pass in your life? Any other course has in it regret and ever-increasing distress.

Is it fully settled with you that you want CHRIST's will brought to pass in your life? George MacDonald, that sturdy Scotchman, phrased it in his simple poem: "What I Said and What CHRIST Said." Maybe I can quote his lines:

I said: "Let me walk in the field."
He said: "No, walk in the town."
I said: "There are no flowers there."
He said: "No flowers, but a crown."

I said: "But the skies are black
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back:
"There is more." He said, "there is sin."

I said: "But the air is thick
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He said: "But hearts are sick,
"And souls in the dark undone."

I said: "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
And He answered: "Choose to-night
If I am to miss you, or they."

I pleaded for time to be given.
He said: "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in Heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide!" ,

Then I turned one look at the field,
And set my face to the town.
He said: "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for the crown? "

Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He,
And I walk in a light divine
That path I had feared to see.

Oh, my brother men, you will miss it unspeakably, you will miss it irrevocably, you will miss it so that memories will burn and conscience will bite like some devouring serpent, if you are not for CHRIST. wouldn't you like publicly to-day to say: "God help me, I would be for Him, I will be for Him, and to-day I yield myself to Him to be for Him till life's day is done? " Every soul that says: "I say that," come tell us now, as we sing the hymn.

THE CLOSING PRAYER.

How we thank Thee, O, our Father, for thy marvelous goodness to us! We go now with a prayer deep and fervent to GOD, that He will give these men and women who confess CHRIST to-day to live for Him simply, honestly, straightforwardly, conscientiously, consistently, till the earthly day is done.

Some here to-day have wandered far from GOD. Yea, Lord, who in this presence has not wandered? But we want to return, we would now leave ourselves in CHRIST's hands, like a little child rests on its mother's heart. Forgive our every evil way, O Lord, and from this hour take us by thy hand and guide us by the counsel of Thy spirit, so that we shall go where, and speak what, and live as the great, good Saviour would ever have us to do. And may the soul in this house all wrong with GOD, bedarkened and troubled, who has missed the right way, has wasted life, has wasted influence, be taught of Thee that it is not too late yet to be reconciled to GOD. Speak to such now and say to that one that GOD will forgive him, and will put his feet in a sure place, and GOD will help him to be strong and true, and right, and safe, if only he will surrender his life to

JESUS, the welcoming Saviour and Lord.

And now may this whole multitude go to-day to speak as they ought for CHRIST, to-day and every day, and to give His cause their best love and loyalty and strength as long as they shall live in the flesh.

Keep us, O Thou covenant-keeping GOD, in the love of CHRIST, and faithful to His holy will, till the day is done. We pray in His all-prevailing name. Amen.

~ end of chapter 14 ~
