

A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers
Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings, Held
In Fort Worth, Texas, June 11-24, 1917

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Chapter Nine -

THE TRAGEDY OF NEGLECT

NIGHT SERVICE, JUNE 15, 1917

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Before coming to the message of the evening, I would take a moment to urge again, with all my heart, upon the Christians who hear me, all and each, to give yourselves as faithfully as possible, during these passing days, to the right kind of religious visiting. Remember, I pray you, my fellow Christians, that there can be no substitutes for the right kind of personal conversation concerning the Christian religion. All about us people are dying from the lack of personal attention. In sight of our church houses there are such people, and they cross our paths from day to day, and numbers of them, it may be, live under the very same roof with us. Oh, I beseech you, give yourselves these passing days to the right kind of religious visiting. If need be, I beseech you, do the unusual thing to help somebody who needs you religiously.

Some years ago I was preaching in an outdoor meeting in the black lands belt, to multitudes of farmers, and one evening one of those honest, earnest, Christian farmers paused after the service was done to say to me: "If I am not here in the morning and to-morrow afternoon, then you may know that I have gone to my next-door neighbor, who is not a Christian, and have proffered to plow for him, that he may come. He is behind with his work. He has had sickness in his family, and if I go to ask him to come to the services, I know the excuses he wilt give; so I am going in the morning to offer to plow for him, to do that neighborly act for him. I am going to urge it upon him, and if I am not present, you may know that he is present."

And the next day I looked for my Christian farmer, and he was not present, and I preached that day to the man he had sent, for whom he plowed, that such man might come to the Saviour, and when the service was done down the aisle came the second farmer, with his face covered with tears, to make his public confession of personal surrender to CHRIST. A simple thing it was for the first man to do, but wasn't the outcome glorious?

A mother said to me: "If you miss me to-morrow, then you may know that I am sending another

little mother, who is not a Christian, for I shall proffer to stay at home and mind her baby, and insist that she come, and if you miss me, know that you have one woman there who needs to hear about CHRIST." And sure enough, at the close of that service down the aisle came the second little mother, and she said: "When that Christian mother proffered to stay to mind my baby, that I might go to GOD's house to hear about CHRIST, my heart went out, and I can no longer hold out against CHRIST." These are simple things, but see to what tremendous results they lead.

If necessary, I pray you, do the unusual thing, the sacrificial thing, to win somebody to CHRIST. Make it impossible, I pray you, my fellow Christians - make it impossible for anybody around you to say: "They have their churches, and they have their preachers, and now and then they have their special meetings, but nobody really cares for my soul." Make that impossible!

Some time ago a stranger came down the aisle in the church where I am glad to minister, to make his public confession of CHRIST as his Saviour, and to take his place that Sunday morning in the church. He is the most widely traveled man that I have personally known with any intimacy. For some twenty years he has gone around the world writing articles and gathering important information for one of the foremost journals of the East. Twelve different times he has been around the globe. He is a man who knows how to talk as well as write, and I said to him: "Mr. so-and-so, won't you stand up and give your testimony about CHRIST to the people, without my asking you any questions?" And he gave a testimony that morning that we will never forget.

But there was one thing in it that probed our very hearts, and made us stand aghast, almost with horror, and it was this: He said to us that morning: "Though I have been around the world these twelve times in these twenty years, and have touched tens of thousands of lives at close range, in all realms and in all lands, only two people in all these twenty years have asked me if it was well with my soul!" Why the very thought is staggering!

And when he had followed CHRIST that night in beautiful believer's baptism, he said to me, as we came out of the baptismal waters: "I am going to my hotel now to write the most grateful word that I can write to those two men who thought enough of my soul to ask me if I was right with GOD."

Oh, my fellow Christians, with an earnestness which GOD would have you feel, and with a faithfulness and with a humility and with a sanity, and with that blessed reasonableness that goes along with the religion of CHRIST, I pray you now, day by day, on the right hand and on the left, give yourselves like you ought, to the right kind of religious visiting. We will pause now for a moment and pray GOD to help us.

THE OPENING PRAYER

We make our appeal to Thee, O Thou Friend Divine, Thou Gracious Father! Forgive us, that though we have been Christians, many of us, for many years, we have been timid, and worse than that, we have been recreant to duty with respect to this most vital matter of all, the matter of speaking the right word to people concerning JESUS and His great salvation. We beseech Thee that every Christian in this large throng this Friday evening may be personally dedicated from this moment for the days just before us, even as never before, to that highest, holiest business of

all - the effort personal to point people in the heavenward way. Go Thou with us, to teach and help us in every effort. O Thou Spirit Divine. Clothe us with wisdom and patience and let our work be such as CHRIST will honor. And whatever the result may be, give us to do our best and gladly leave the result with CHRIST.

We pray for this goodly city, which by leaps and bounds is making its material expansion and progress. Let its spiritual progress be the city's crowning prosperity. Lord, hear our prayer for every house in all this city. Hear our prayer for the great army of laboring men and business men and professional men, who from early morn till dewy eve give themselves earnestly and diligently to the demands of the big battle of life. Hear our fervent prayer for those who rule and minister in the city's affairs: Clothe them with heavenly wisdom and grace that they may rule for the highest good of the people and for the glory of GOD. Hear our prayer for parents, charged with the solemn trust of rearing their children for present and eternal blessedness. Hear our prayer for every friend CHRIST has in this city of every name. May the mercy of GOD and His grace be abundantly meted out to every such friend of GOD, and, oh, may we be better friends for Him and better workers for Him with every passing hour.

Hear our prayer for this Friday evening's service. May our hearts be divinely opened by the good Spirit Divine to attend unto that which CHRIST would have us heed and hear. May the right word be said. Thou knowest, Lord, what such word should be. None of us know, but Thou knowest. Guide us, that the right word shall be said, and said in the right temper, and wing it home, we pray Thee, to every waiting heart. And may we do tonight with CHRIST's truth just what we ought to do, and what we will wish we had done when we stand in that day of days to give our personal account to CHRIST. And we pray it all in His all prevailing name. Amen!

THE TRAGEDY OF NEGLECT

Text: "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**" (Hebrews 2:3).

The Bible calls our attention always to the big questions of life, to the immense questions, to the eternally important questions. For example: "**If a man die, shall he live again?**" Millions are asking that question afresh in this time of world war and world crisis. Or take this question: "**Is thine heart right?**" Or take this question:

"**What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**" Or take this question: "**What is your life?**" The Bible asks the big questions, the transcendently momentous questions.

Let us take one of these big questions out of the Bible to-night for our text, a question intensely personal for us all and each: "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**" There is one word in the text that points the reason why men and women are finally lost, and you have guessed that word, as I quoted the text, or you will guess it now, when I quote it again: "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**"

Now you know the word that points the reason why men and women are finally lost. In this Christian land of ours men and women are finally lost, not because they intend it. Do you suppose anybody really intends, deliberately intends, to be lost, deliberately intends to miss

Heaven, with all that it has and shall ever be? Do you suppose that any human being deliberately plans, definitely plans, to miss the upward way? Why, then, do they miss it? One little word in our text points the answer: "**Neglect.**" "**How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?**"

The whole world is a battle-field covered over with the wrecks occasioned by neglect. You may behold such wrecks constantly in the world temporal all about you. How many a time is the sight vouchsafed unto us of young people, with prospect and promise, who in life's morning neglect proper habits, proper training, proper discipline, and go out unprepared for the big battle of life. Oh, if in life's morning, the time for preparation, the time for discipline and the forming of right habits, they would only study and give themselves to those habits that belong so properly and so vitally to youth, how different their life story and battle would be! Often when it is too late, the remorseful memory of neglect burns like some coal of fire!

Or look into the realm of health. The kindly doctor is summoned some day to the loved one under our roof, and he makes his careful diagnosis, and his face is serious, and he makes the suggestion, tactfully but earnestly: "This case calls for a complete change, a change in climate. Conditions here are alarming. Make the change without delay." The skillful scientist advises, but we presume, and the suffering patient presumes. We hope against hope. We wonder if the doctor is not mistaken. And the weeks drag on, and the case suddenly plunges downward for the worse, and the doctor is summoned again, and again makes his careful diagnosis, and his face is now terribly beclouded. Full-fledged tuberculosis holds the patient in its grasp. Oh, neglect, neglect, what mischiefs thou dost work in the realm of health!

And now, when we pass the subject up to the higher realm, the supreme realm, the realm of religion, how tragically and how horribly true it is that neglect there, in that highest realm, gets in its most undoing work.

Even we Christians must all along bewail ourselves that our neglect has been so serious. I daresay there is not a Christian listening to me, certainly not one of any extended experience, but whose heart is touched with a twinge of deepest sorrow as you give yourself for a little while to memory, to recollection, and have come trooping back to you the memories of duties neglected, of opportunities forfeited, of privileges that have been all owed to slip away unimproved, which privileges are gone now and shall be returnless forever.

Even we Christians must all along bewail ourselves that in this manner and that and the other we have so sadly neglected in the great matters of religion. We have neglected people. We have forgotten people. We have overlooked people. We have passed by people. We have given attention to the smaller things, the slighter things, the less consequential things; and the vast things, the supremely worthful things, have often gotten by us, and through neglect they have gone, and gone to come back no more.

Have you ever had a religious census taken of this city? I daresay you have had such from time to time, even as I have seen such from time to time in my own city. During the last one had in my city there came back into my hands some six thousand cards. Oh, what revelations were on those cards! Hundreds of names were on those cards of men and women who elsewhere had been members of the church, but who had turned away from their home back yonder in some other community, the city or the village or the country place; who had come up to the city and had got

caught in the currents and had drifted with the tide, and through neglect they had not positionized themselves with the church at all. Just through neglect they had gone with the tide and were far away from the church and religious habits. Here was one who was once a Sunday school worker, devoted back yonder, but now that a change of residence is made, he has drifted with the tide, and no deep religious habits hold him at all. Here was one who was an officer yonder in the church in another place, but he came to the city, and he was not known, and others did not specially take hold of him, and he sadly wandered, and his religious habits were broken. Oh, the tragedy that has come to many a man just in that way!

Now, I wonder if this Friday evening I am speaking to Christian men and women who in the other days walked closely beside the great Master, who came up gladly and with regularity to the house of GOD at the time appointed for public worship, who followed the Christian habits devotedly and conscientiously; and yet you have come to this city, and the changes have been marked from what they were where before you lived, and your habits religious have been broken, and your duties religious have been neglected. Oh, I would lift up my voice, and I would send out to you the most brotherly pleading I can change that course, and change it without delay! Take your place, I pray you, with GOD's people. Come back again, I pray you, to the church, which since you have resided here you may have neglected. Take up again, I pray you, the habits that go along with the vital Christian life, and let those habits be again regnant in your life.

See to it that in your own house and in your own life such ideals and precedents and standards are lifted up as shall give increasing gladness to your own heart, and as shall be a blessing to all about you. And if you Christian men and women who listen to me, who are positionized in the church with CHRIST's people, know of such people who are drifting with the tide, duty-neglecting Christians, with their church membership elsewhere, with their church letters in their trunks, with their memberships lapsed, oh, I pray you, give yourselves at that point, in the hours before you, to helping such men and women, who need your counsel and good cheer, and who need your re-enforcement.

Every Christian in this community, not positively identified with the people of GOD, every secret disciple of JESUS in this community, or going his way with his light hidden under a bushel, makes it harder for CHRIST's people to do CHRIST's work in this city, and makes it more difficult for sinners about you to be saved. Oh, friend of JESUS, whoever and wherever you are, friend of JESUS, come now and cease your neglect, I pray you, and take your place positively; be positionized conscientiously and consistently, I pray you, with the people of GOD.

But now I turn away from the appeal to duty-neglecting Christians to address my word to the one here who is not a Christian at all. The tragedy of neglect in your case is a tragedy indeed appalling. How shall you escape, if you just neglect, if you simply neglect, if you merely neglect, so great salvation?

Men do not have to blaspheme GOD to be finally lost. Men do not have to lift up their little fists clinched in the face of the holy and omnipotent Almighty, to be lost. Men have only to go on down the tide, floating, drifting, neglecting, to be finally lost. Neglect is the tragedy of all tragedies in the deadly undoing of human souls.

And now note, I pray you, what is involved in this matter of your neglect. Your salvation is

involved. "**How shall we escape,**" our text asks us, "**if we neglect so great salvation?**" Your salvation is involved. Your salvation! Oh, what can compare with that? CHRIST JESUS came down from Heaven, and He comes yet, in the power of His gospel, to give us His great salvation. CHRIST comes to save us in our totality.

- He would save not only our souls, our spirits
- He would save our lives.
- He would save our bodies.
- He would save our brains.
- He would save our influence.
- He would save our personality.
- He would save us completely, entirely, leaving nothing out.

CHRIST came to save us from sin unto righteousness, from selfishness unto magnanimity and largeness and nobleness. CHRIST came to save us from littleness unto greatness. CHRIST came to save us from the small to the large. CHRIST came to save us from defeat to triumph. CHRIST came to save us from night unto day. CHRIST came to save us from hell unto Heaven. CHRIST came to save us in our whole life, in our service, in our business, in our daily task, completely. CHRIST came thus to save us. Surely, His is a great salvation.

Oh, my friend, getting to Heaven is a very, very important matter, but CHRIST means a great deal more than that by His great salvation. CHRIST comes to fit you to live here and now, to fit you for your task, whatever your task is.

Are you a toiler at this or that, a man of business, in the professional world - a man of leadership? CHRIST comes and proffers you His own grace and forgiveness and mercy and divine re-enforcement, that, whatever your sphere, your lot, your post, your task, life may be conserved and saved. Tell me, what is a human life for? What is that hand for? What is the eye for? What is human life for? CHRIST would save your life to all that is highest and truest and noblest and best.

CHRIST comes to give a completed life. CHRIST does not come to crib and coffin and confine you in some little, ignoble, superficial, unworthy life. CHRIST comes proffering to take out of your life not a solitary thing except that which poisons and maims and kills. The sanest thing on the face of this earth is to be a friend of JESUS CHRIST. He came to give His great salvation; and no matter how much a man may rise, how high he may climb, how great may be his achievements, man's life is vitiated and the true end of life is defeated and lost, if a man lives counter to the will of CHRIST JESUS, the one rightful Master of mankind.

Napoleon came with his soldiers to cross the desert on one of his long marches, and in that early morning when they started across the desert, the historian tells us that the hot sun came down on the white sands, and the light and heat reflected made the men pant for water, as they marched across that terrible desert. In their fierce thirst, they looked everywhere for water, but the wells were dry, and no water could be found.

Then they looked out there a little distance ahead and saw a beautiful lake of water, right out in the desert before them, and they lifted up a shout of joy, and started in a run toward the water,

but as they ran toward that lake, the lake ran. As they got nearer, the lake receded and got farther away. It was not a lake of water at all. It was a mirage of the desert, such as you and I have seen many a time in this great West. It was a cheat. It was a delusion. It was a snare. Oh, my fellow-man, traveling with me through time to an eternity endless, that picture of the mirage in the desert is the picture of human life at its best, without GOD. Without GOD, life is defeated, and its true aim vitiated and missed and lost - without GOD. Awful expression is that in the Bible: **"Having no hope, and without GOD in the world."**

JESUS comes with His great salvation to save us from our past. Oh, that would be wonderful, wonderful, wonderful! If some power could come into my life and take my life, with its chapters that I regret to think about, with its remorseful memories, with its evil hours, with its mistaken words and deeds, wonderful would be that power, to come into my life and say: "I will forgive it all, and I will blot out every evil thing in your past, every one, so that the record shall be white like the snow." What a wonderful power that would be! CHRIST is that power. This is His promise: "I will blot out your sins, and put them as far from you as the East is from the West, oh, sinner, if you will come and honestly surrender to me."

But that is not all.

CHRIST saves us in our stressful, eventful, important present. CHRIST saves us and would save us in the big battle that we are fighting here and now, at the daily task, with the responsibilities thick and many that come to confront us. CHRIST is man's supreme need now. More than he needs human support, more than he needs bread and meat, more than he needs good health, more than he needs fame, more than he needs money, a human being needs CHRIST to be the guide and re-enforcement of his daily earthly life. CHRIST offers to be that for those that will be His friends.

Nor is that all. CHRIST comes to the one who will honestly be His friend and says to Him: "You need not be afraid of what is coming next. You need not be afraid of the evil tidings that you shall hear. You need not be afraid of some black Friday in the future. You need not be afraid of that grim sarcasm of human life, which you shall face at the close, the name of which is Death."

- You need not be afraid of what is coming after death.
- You need not be afraid to face CHRIST at His judgment bar.
- You need not be afraid of what is coming during GOD's great beyond forever.
- You need not be afraid of anything at all, now or hereafter, if you will only be the friend of CHRIST.

Oh, my brother men, isn't that a salvation worth having? Can you afford for any consideration to leave it out, and pass it by, and do without it?

Now I am coming, in view of all that is involved, to ask you who are neglecting your own highest welfare, your soul's welfare, if you won't cease your neglect, and cease it from this hour? What arguments shall I marshal to help you, to persuade you, to encourage you, if I may, to cease your neglect of your own highest welfare? What arguments shalt I summon?

Let me name three.

There are many to be named, but at this time let me briefly name three, with a passing word of amplification in each case.

First of all, I am coming to say that you should give up your neglect of your own salvation because such neglect is unreasonable. Now, when the preacher comes and make his appeal to reason, what a great appeal it is! That is CHRIST's first appeal to the children of men. He makes the appeal to reason.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Come now, oh, men and women, and let us reason together.

Sharpen your wits now and enter into a controversy with GOD. **"Come now and let us reason together."** So, then, the first appeal to you to cease your neglect is that your neglect of your spiritual welfare is utterly unreasonable. When the preacher makes the appeal to reason, every sentient, reasonable man ought to open wide the avenue to his mind and say: "I will listen to that appeal." Your neglect of your soul is unreasonable. Can it be reasonable for a human being to neglect GOD, who made him? Can that be reasonable? Can it be reasonable for me, the creature of a day, with my life utterly contingent on the will of GOD - can it be reasonable for me to turn my back and turn my heart away from GOD? Can that be reasonable? Do I not owe to my Maker certain inescapable obligations, and can it be reasonable for me to ignore them and forget them?

And more, can it be reasonable for me, a creature who must face the future, to ignore that future, and fail to make provision for that inescapable future - can that be reasonable?

Why, that little squirrel there in the autumn time would teach us. You can see it gathering the nuts and gathering the corn, and storing them away in the hollow tree, so that it shall have provision when the winter day comes and the day of need shall call. The little squirrel teaches us.

And the little ant, which we trample all unknowingly beneath our feet, if we would pause and look carefully, we should see it carrying its provisions out there to a common storehouse, that it may have supplies when the day of need and rigorous demand shall call for supplies.

And shall a creature made in the image of GOD - shall a human being, upon whom GOD hath set the eternal stamp, shall a creature made to live when those stars by night, and the sun by day shall be blotted out forever, and when we live on in a world to come, eternal in its duration, can there be any reason for such a being failing to provide for that great and endless future?

Then I ask your consideration to another argument why you should cease your neglect of yourself, and cease it now, and that is that our neglect of our soul's welfare is not right. Now, when the preacher makes the appeal to right, what a challenging appeal he makes! Oh, what a great word is that word "right!" "Right" is the word that makes history. "Right" is the word that thrills through the ages. This is ever the big question of all: Is this thing right? When the preacher comes and makes the appeal to right, what a commanding appeal he makes to the children of men! I am coming, then, to say that your neglect of your soul's salvation is not right to any creature in GOD's vast universe. It is not right toward anybody.

First of all, I have already hinted at it, it is not right toward GOD.

Surely, you will not contend that it can be right for the creature to ignore and to neglect his Creator. You will not say that that can be right. Some obligations to GOD are inexorable and inescapable. You will not say that they may be mocked, and that to mock them would be right. Surely, gratitude - what a praiseworthy quality that is in human life! - gratitude should spur every right-thinking man in the world to turn to GOD, from whom comes every blessing, and say to GOD:

"What wouldst thou have at my hands?
After thy mercy and grace and benediction and goodness,
gratitude inspires me to respond to whatever thou askest."

There is another argument. Your neglect is not right to yourself. Men owe some duties to themselves. Men owe it to themselves to make the most and the best of themselves. No human being should fling life away, and debauch it, and prostitute it, and trifle with it. Every human being owes an inescapable obligation to himself to make the most and the best of himself.

Then would you tell me that a man has the right to-night, while we are worshiping here quietly, such man yonder in the city somewhere, wearied out by sin, or disappointed, no matter what the occasion, to put the deadly gun to his temple and end his mortal life? No, no! It cannot be right. Suicide cannot be justified, and by as much as the human soul outranks the human body in worth, is suicide of soul utterly indefensible and unjustifiable. Every soul rational that shall miss the upward way and go the downward way shall be a spiritual suicide. GOD is never at fault and never will be, that a rational soul misses the upward way.

But that is not all the argument about being and doing right. I have said that your neglect of your soul is not right toward GOD, and that it is not right toward yourself. Now I am coming to add this other word: Your neglect of your soul is not right toward anybody else on the face of this earth.

We have inescapable relations to one another, and these relations should not be broken and ignored. Our lives are bound up with one another, and we will help or hurt one another every day we live. I tell you, gentlemen, that is an argument to take deep hold upon every normal man and upon every sensitive conscience. You and I are daily helping people upward by our personal influence, or daily we are dragging them downward by our same personal influence. And I speak to you the sober truth when I declare that no human being has the moral right to occupy a position anywhere, in the occupancy of which position he may hurt somebody else. No human being has that right.

In a city where I preached in other years, two young lawyers often were seen in the congregation. They had come from some smaller community to the larger city, there to build their business and to live their lives. Interesting young men they were, partners in the high realm of law. One of earth's most honorable callings is that of the worthy lawyer! I became interested in the young men profoundly. They came time and again to the series of meetings such as these.

Night after night I spoke to the people, and those two young lawyers, inseparable young fellows, came night after night to the services. One morning I called upon them at their office to confer

with them about personal religion. Happily, I found them alone, and as carefully as I could I felt my way into their lives, and they were talking after a moment or two rather freely, and when at last I asked them: "Why are you not openly and positively on the side of CHRIST?" They said: "We will give you a reason. Perhaps you won't think it a good one."

I said: "I should certainly like to know it, whatever it is, because I am deeply interested in you."

Then they pointed me to Judge So-and-so, one of the most successful lawyers of the community, and they said: "He is not a Christian. He is not a church man, and we have taken him for our model." I said: "You have indeed chosen a splendid man, but no man in the world should be any man's model.

He is one of the most interesting men I know. I delight to call him my personal friend." They said: "Well, he rarely goes to church, he is a first-class lawyer and a very useful citizen, and we have concluded that if he can afford to pass personal religion by, with his intellectuality and success and standing, so can we pass it by.

"That," they said, "is about all the plea we can give for not being publicly for CHRIST." I told them other things which were in my mind, which I need not relate here, but my own mind was made up as to what I should do, as I left them, and I went straight to the Judge's office, and fortunately found him alone. He greeted me cordially, for he was everything that goes to make the superb gentleman. I said: "I need not sit down, Judge. You are busy, and so am I. I have come to ask you a question in ethics." His eyes twinkled with merriment, as he said: "This is a question for you preachers and teachers - this question in ethics."

I said: "Yes, and a question it is for the lawyer and the doctor and the farmer and the merchant and the banker and the editor, and everybody else." "All right," he said, "what is your question in ethics?" I said: "would you say that a man had the moral right to occupy some position, in the occupancy of which position he will hurt somebody else? Does he have that moral right?" And he turned upon me, with his strong, clear eyes and manly face, and with conviction surpassing in his voice, said: "No, no! No man has the moral right to occupy any position in the occupancy of which he will hurt somebody else. What is the application of your question in ethics?"

And then I told my story to him of my visit to the two young men, and what they said to me, and how they were even then sheltering behind him. I can never forget his agitation. He went over to the window in the large building, and lifted it on that wintry day, and looked out on the crowds that surged in the streets below. Then he came back, and said: "I cannot answer that question, can I?" I said: "Only in one way, sir. You might be given a thousand years to find the way to answer that question, but there is just one right way to answer it."

After a moment or two more of conversation, he said: "I will be at the services to-night," and I bade him good-morning without another word.

Day wore to nightfall, and I stood up to preach. I looked everywhere, and yonder were the two young men.

I looked carefully again, and there was the Judge coming in, and the young usher gave him a chair to my left. That evening I preached to one man, for if I may win him there is no telling

what may be the result upon others. When the sermon was ended, I asked: "Who, for his own sake, first of all, and then for the sake of somebody else who may be sheltering behind him, perhaps all unknown to himself, will make his surrender to CHRIST? Who will come down the aisle and say: 'That is my case, and that is my decision?'"

Down the long aisle came the noble Judge and took my hand, with a seriousness one would never forget, and as he held my hand and talked for a moment, he said: "That question in ethics got me this morning. You had not reached the street, this morning, until I shut the door and locked it, and fell on my knees, and said: 'Great GOD, has it come to this, that I am staying out of the kingdom of GOD myself, and by the power of my personal influence, taking others in the downward way? Help me, that my influence may be saved, as well as my soul.'"

He had just finished saying all this when I said: "Look, Judge, behind you," and turning, he saw behind him the two young lawyers, waiting until he had finished, to take my hand and to take his, and with a sob in each one of their throats they said: "When we saw you start, Judge, the thing was decided with us."

Oh, my men, my brother men! My brother men! You for your own sake should take the step supreme for your soul. But the issue is infinitely bigger than that. You should take the step for the sake of everybody else. A man's unconscious influence has the largest power of all - a man's unconscious influence - the influence he does not know anything about. It goes out from every man like the fragrance from the flower, and it goes wider and deeper and farther than any human being can even comprehend.

It is that unconscious influence that often gets in its deadliest and most undoing work over others. You are positionized. The measure of everyone of us is taken in our community. People discuss us, and they think about us. And in that deepest, highest realm of all, in the realm of religion, they take our measure, all of us, in the communities where we live. Our unconscious influence is the most serious of all.

The papers told us awhile ago of a brave little wife who waited through the weeks on her sick husband. She would be awakened by the clock in the night, to get up and give him his medicine. At last she was worn almost to desperation, and scarcely knew what she did, as she got up, hour after hour to give him the medicine. At last, the hour came when, half-awake, she reached up for the vial and poured out the medicine, and put it to his mouth, and no sooner had he swallowed it than he made an outcry to her: "Oh, Mary, dear, you have killed your John! You have given the wrong medicine." And then, as he saw her agony, he said: "Oh, I know, dear, that you did not mean to do it, but this is all. I am finished." And he was finished, before another hour had passed.

My men and women, I am pleading to-night not simply for your soul. I am pleading that that life, that influence, that personality, that manhood, that womanhood, that example, that self, your whole earthly lifetime forty or sixty or seventy years, or more or less - that your all shall be put on the side where you will not hurt your fellow-men, but where you will help them every day.

But I have still another argument to which I would summon your attention, to constrain you thereby to give up your neglect. I have already said two things. I have said your neglect is not reasonable, from any viewpoint, and I have said your neglect is not right - not right toward GOD,

nor toward yourself, nor toward anybody else. I would now say, from my deepest heart, this other word:

Your neglect is not safe.

Oh, my heart is heavy here your neglect is not safe! And why is your neglect not safe? I have already said that you cannot live like life ought to be lived, if you live it neglecting GOD. It is impossible. Life is maimed and crippled, no matter whose the life, if you presume to live it without GOD. Your neglect, therefore, is not safe.

Moreover, your neglect is not safe because this life is not all. Your neglect is not safe because this little earthly life must have an end. Your neglect is not safe because you must die. Oh, if I could say that so that you would believe it! YOU must die! You MUST die! You must DIE! Will you believe it? And will you address yourself to proper preparation for that solemn event? There are a thousand gates to death, and the easiest thing on this earth is for death to snap the cord of life and send us into the great beyond.

May I tell you the saddest memory out of my young manhood?

It comes to me now, on the wings of recollection. It has come to me a thousand times. I had just found CHRIST, as I was turning into young manhood. I knew very little about Him. About all that I knew was that I had decided for Him. I did not know how to talk to anybody else.

The earnest, faithful preacher, genuine to the depths of his heart and sincere as the sunlight, true as truth itself, as every preacher ought to be, spoke to the boys in the school, and groups of them made their decision for CHRIST. Next to the last night of the meeting had come. I sat beside my desk-mate. He had not yet decided for CHRIST. I could not any longer be silent, and so I bent over beside Jim and said: "Jim, you go. All is at stake, Jim. You make your surrender. I don't know how to talk to you, Jim, only I would have you go."

He looked earnestly into my face and said: "Let me off to-night, George, and if you will let me off to-night, I promise you that, if I feel like this to-morrow night, I will certainly go. Let me off for to-night." I said: "Jim, your issue is not with me, nor is your issue with that preacher who is preaching. Your issue is with CHRIST, who died for you. He has spoken to you. He has made you serious. He calls you. Make your surrender to Him, and make it now, while you can."

He put his face down in his hands, and was moved with deepest emotion, and I bent over him again, and made a second effort. I said: "Jim, if you will make your surrender to CHRIST, and go down the aisle to that minister, I will walk with you. I will take your arm, if you like, or you can take mine. Won't you do it to-night?" And then resolutely he summoned himself and looked into my face, with purpose in his eye and in his words, and said: "Not to-night. If I feel like this to-morrow night, I will go, but I will not go to-night."

Oh, I wish I could leave the rest untold, but the story would not be done. When the next night came he was not there. The next day in school he was not there. We asked about him, but nobody seemed to know where he was. And then the meeting ended, and the second day came, and the school, but he was not there. Nobody knew why. And the third day, and nobody knew why, and the fourth day; and I said: "I will go by his home to find out why."

The mother met me at the door and said: "Why, didn't you know? He came home from the meeting the other night, and before the night was gone, he was stricken with dreadful pneumonia. Oh, he is sick, sir; too sick to see you. He cannot see anybody but the doctor and the nurse and his mother and father." I went around the fifth day, and he was worse.

I went around the sixth day, and the mother's eyes were red from weeping, and she said: "We have little hope, sir." I went around the seventh day, and I said: "Let me stay. Maybe I have not done my duty. I have just been a Christian myself a few weeks. Maybe I have not done my duty. Let me stay with him. Maybe he will know me. Let me be near him. Maybe he will be conscious and know me."

She let me stay, and the doctors stayed, and the nurse stayed, and the parents stayed, and I stayed. Oh, that long drawn out and never to be forgotten night! Midnight came, and he stirred uneasily there in his bed, and pulled nervously at the coverings that wrapped his bed. Then he began to talk, and we all bent our ears to catch what he said. With his hoarse whispers, and staring wildly, this is what he said: "Not to-night, George! Let me off to-night. I promise if you will let me off to-night I will settle this to-morrow night. I will settle it to-morrow night, if you will let me off tonight, but not to-night. I am not going to-night. I am not going to-night, and you needn't talk further. I will settle it to-morrow night, if I feel like this, but I am not going to-night."

In another hour or two the spirit took its flight. Oh, the tragedy, the tragedy, of a man's dying like that! My brother men, I tell you, men ought not to die like that!

What is the issue to which I am summoning your immediate and best consideration?

- It is a choice between two masters. One is your friend, and the other is your foe. Which should it be?
- It is a choice between one of two lives. One is a life of ever-increasing usefulness, and the other is a life of ever-increasing waste and hurt.
- It is a choice between two deaths, the one unafraid and in peace, and the other without preparation and without GOD.
- It is a choice between one of two worlds in the great beyond - the world of peace and bliss and hope and life forever, or the world of waste and loss and defeat forever.

Which should your choice be?

Oh, I beg you to remember, it is your soul that is at stake, and it is your soul that I am pleading for.

If, as I came to-night to the tent, I had passed on the outskirts of this fair city some little woman driving a vegetable wagon, and she had driven it off into some deep ravine, and could not extricate her team there in the deep ditch below, if I had come and stood on this platform and said: "Out yonder at a certain place a little helpless woman, selling her vegetables to support her fatherless children, has had trouble with her team, and the team is at the bottom of the ditch, and she cannot get the team up;" and if I had said: "Aren't there men here who will hurry to that little woman, and give her relief?" - men, chivalrous and many, would have been on their feet as soon

as I had stated the case.

And yet tonight I am talking about your soul, your soul, that will soon be in an eternal world - your soul. Give it a chance! Give it a chance, before it is forever too late!

We are going to pray in a moment, but before we pray I would ask: Are there men and women here who say: "Sir, we are wrong with GOD and know it and confess it to-night, and wish you to pray for us?"

In the church or out, once in the church, or never, once professing religion and drifting, or never having made any profession of religion at all, are there those who say: "We are wrong with GOD to-night and know it? We would have you and these men and women who pray, to pray that we may be right with GOD before it is too late?"

Do you say: "Yes, I would lift my hand on such call?" Quietly and without any singing now, you will let us see, by your uplifted hands, if you are interested, if GOD has spoken to you tonight, if you wish to be saved.

I am looking now and seeing, and so are these hundreds of Christians around you. Gladly now will we pray for you.

THE CLOSING PRAYER

We make our appeal, O GOD, to Thee. Great is our joy that so many in this place are for CHRIST. We would serve Him better henceforth, far better, than we have served Him heretofore. But now we join in one prayer. It is for the men and women about us who say to us: "We wish you to pray for us that we may be saved"

Lord, as best we can we bring them right now to Thee. Oh, teach thou each seeking one that CHRIST does the forgiving, that He does the saving, but that the soul is to give up to Him, that He may save in His own divine and gracious way. Let that blessed invitation, when Thou sayest: "**Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,**" now take deep hold of every one, and let each one say: "I will not wait, I will not presume, I will not delay, I will not further neglect to yield myself to CHRIST."

Whatever the doubts, whatever the difficulties, whatever the sins, whatever the fears, whatever the questions, whatever the temptations in the life, teach Thou each interested soul, O CHRIST, that Thou wilt surely forgive and save, if only such soul will surrender to Thee. We pray that that surrender may be made now, because now is GOD's time, the wise time, the safe time, and because now might be the only time. Grant, O gracious Lord, that those whom Thou hast called to-night, saying "**Come unto me,**" may now by thy grace be given to say: "We will come to-day, even as GOD bids us come to-day and accept CHRIST as our Saviour forever."

We pray it in the great Master's name.

Amen.

THE EXHORTATION CONTINUED

Now we are going to sing that simple invitation hymn, two or three stanzas of it, No. 175:

"Why do you wait, dear brother,
Oh, why do you tarry so long?"

Before we sing, I have a question to ask.

Here it is:

Does some man or woman or child here to-night say: "I am a duty-neglecting, backslidden Christian, but GOD help me, I am definitely resolved right now to end such neglect and to renew my vows with CHRIST?"

Come forward, then, before all the people, as we sing.

Do you say: "That is not my case, but it is this - my case is that I am not and have never been a Christian at all. But to-night, seeing my need, realizing my duty, and wishing that this greatest question of all shall be settled, I take my stand for CHRIST. I yield myself to Him, that He may save me as He wills. I give my surrender to CHRIST. I have given it. I gave it last night, or before, but I have not made it known, or I will now give it and make it known. Come then and take my hand, as we wait these two or three moments and sing this simple song.

Who comes as we sing it?

(Three stanzas were sung, during which several men and women made public confession of CHRIST, and others came as backsliders to declare the renewal of their vows with CHRIST.)

THE BENEDICTION

And now, as we go, our Father, deepen Thou the work of peace in our every heart. Deepen it by the searching might of Thy truth, applied by Thy Divine Spirit. Deepen it hour by hour, so that we all and each, may now and always give heed as we ought to the highest and the best, even to thy counsels and calls.

Strengthen Thou all these who came forward to confess their acceptance of CHRIST as their Saviour and Lord. Add unto the company many. And grant that all through this city, during the days just before us, such appeals may be made by the friends of CHRIST to those who are not now His friends, that before many days shall have passed, many not now His friends may be gladly singing with us the praises of His saving grace. Oh, how we bless Thee for thy saving grace! Guide Thou and keep all these who put their trust in Thee.

And now as the people go, may the blessing of the triune GOD be granted you all and each, to abide with you forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 9 ~