

## **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

by George W. Truett, D. D.  
Pastor First Baptist Church", Dallas, Texas

Compiled and Edited by

J. B. Cranfill, LL. D.

**FIFTEEN -**

### **THE DOOM OF DELAY**

**NIGHT SERVICE, JUNE 19, 1917**

#### **PRELIMINARY REMARKS.**

A letter has just been handed me from a mother, who says she has been attending these services, and has received a large blessing from them. She says in the letter that her son is away in the training camp, getting ready to respond to the country's call to war, and she greatly desires the prayers of the Christian people here assembled, for the salvation of that son.

I can well believe from what she says about him in the letter that he is, indeed, a noble son, the pride and joy of his mother's heart. It will surely be a proper thing for us now to pray for him, and for all the other sons who have gone out from this community, like him, in response to the country's call.

I would pause just here to ask if there are other parents present, whose sons have gone away to the training camps to make ready to serve the nation in this world crisis? We will unite our prayers in just a moment for those sons.

I wonder if there are not parents all through this great throng, who have sons and daughters who are not saved. I should like to ask every parent present, Father and mother, for whose unsaved child or children you would like to ask for prayer, along with these that have just been mentioned, the soldier boys that are away from home; every parent in this midst, who has a child not a Christian, whom you would see saved in GOD's time and way, to stand quietly this moment. Many are standing.

One eye sees and knows all that is represented by this standing multitude. the Lord teach us to pray! May we pray now, with heads bowed.

#### **THE OPENING PRAYER.**

Just because we need Thee, O Thou great and gracious Father, we would call upon Thee yet again, before the message of the hour is to be brought to the people. We would be in thy presence here, waiting upon Thee. just as Thou wouldst have us. We would turn from every evil way. We would follow the Lord just as He points the way and from this very moment.

And now we would unite our prayers for all our soldier boys, who have gone from us in response to the nation's call, Lord, shield. them from evil and so teach them concerning the things of GOD that they shall be GOD's men, the soldiers and friends of the great Saviour, living for Him, loving Him, and following Him where'er they may be called in response to His will. May those who are now CHRIST's friends be better friends to Him every day, and in thus serving Him may they bless their comrades with eternal blessing.

And may all those who are not CHRIST's friends - those represented by parents here to-night and similar sons throughout our great country - we pray that upon them all may be brought to bear such worthy Christian influences that every one of them shall be speedily won to CHRIST, and then go to live for Him with all the fulness and usefulness of the Christian life. In these unusually anxious and responsible day's, may all these young men be taught of the Lord and find their strength in His control.

We beseech Thee to look with favor upon all these parents to-night, who have witnessed to the fact that they have some child dear to their hearts who is out of the ark of safety. O, first of all we pray Thee to bless these parents! In their own hearts, give them all and each to be right with GOD. If any parent has come short of duty in the training of the child, may such parent set about from this very minute to redeem the time, to pursue the wisest possible course in the immediate future, so that the best shall come to the child.

Oh, we pray that the immeasurably solemn responsibility of parenthood may be borne in upon us all, so that all parents in this presence shall address themselves, with all sincerity and diligence and devotion, to advise and to lead and to pray for and help their children in the highest way, even in that way which shall have GOD's approval.

Speak. we pray Thee, Lord, to the waiting multitude. Search our hearts. Deepen within us the sense of eternal things.

Oh, deepen within us the sense of the value of time, and the mighty meaning of personal influence, of personal responsibility. Write the lesson deeply in our every heart that each man is his brother's keeper, and that if we neglect, and evil comes to such brother, GOD shall require his blood at our hands. Oh, let us see what a great thing it is to live - to live in that high way, in that sublimely faithful way, that GOD commands and that the interests of humanity about us so imperiously demand.

God be gracious to us now, without Thee we can do nothing.

It is not by might, nor by power, but by thy spirit! O Lord, that these blessed things are done for the children of men. We would not put our confidence for one moment in arms of flesh. We would put it altogether in the living GOD.

- May He take us by the hand, and wield the service to-night as He wishes.

- May He give the preacher to speak what and as CHRIST would have him speak.
- May the people's hearts be opened divinely, so that they shall hear and respond Just as CHRIST would have this multitude to hear and respond.

Find us to-night, O Lord, every one of us who has come to these pews. Oh, find us, heart by heart, and life by life, and incline us to the upper and better way.

- If duty has been sadly neglected, may we be unwilling from tonight to continue in such neglect.
- If backslidings hold Christians here, may they now rise up with a high resolve and come back to CHRIST.
- If men and women have long halted between two opinions, whether to come to CHRIST or wait longer, may they put away the matter of waiting and come now.

May the boys and girls of tender years - how we love them and would commend every one of them to JESUS - may they to-night be unwilling longer to wait to say yes to CHRIST. And may GOD's will, whatever that is, wherever that leads, whatever that costs, be done by us all, throughout the entire service to-night; for CHRIST's sake. Amen.

### THE DOOM OF DELAY

Text: "**He lingered.**" - Genesis 19:16.

Deeper than any words I can say may indicate is the desire of my heart so to speak that I may help the people. No other concern have I, in speaking in Fort Worth, or speaking anywhere else, if I am able to read my heart. I would do the people good, and not evil at all. The longing is ever present with me, and inexpressible, that the people may have the crown and climax of life, which is true religion.

That was a pungent thing a little boy said to his Father: "Papa, is your soul insured?" "Why do you ask, my boy?" "Because I heard Uncle George say that you had your life insured, and your house insured, but he was afraid that you would lose your soul, because you seemed to have no thought for your soul. Papa, won't you get it insured right away?" The little fellow fired a center shot when he asked that question. How true it is that men and women do insure their lives, and insure their houses, as they ought, and sometimes insure autos, and yet the eternal claims of the soul are passed recklessly by.

That question asked needs ever to ring in our ears: "**What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**" What does it count, if a man shall rise high in the world of business, or in the world of statecraft, or in the word social and intellectual, if such man forgets to give heed to the highest claim of all, and lives and dies without the favor of GOD, and without conserving the welfare of the soul? What does it all matter?

How solemn is the thought that men and women come to public worship like this, and hear and feel and think and desire, and yet through the power of delay miss the upward way, and lose that which is of eternal value. The text points such a case as that. You need not forget the text. It may be easily remembered, because there are just two words in it: "**He lingered.**"

It describes the conduct of a man whose name was Lot, who occupied wrong relations, and GOD sent angels to warn him to cease from such wrong relations, and pursue the right path - the path of importance and wisdom and safety for himself and others. And yet, though he was warned faithfully by GOD's messengers, there stands out the ominous signboard in his life, on which are written two little words: "**He lingered.**"

Evidently, this man Lot is the exact counterpart of men and women in every community where the Gospel is preached.

Faithfully are they told of their danger and their duty. They are warned concerning the peril that there is in lingering. And yet they wait and presume and float down the current, until at last all that is highest and safest and best has been forfeited and lost.

I wonder, as I begin to speak on this admonitory theme, if in this large press of people this evening I am speaking to men and women, to parents, to middle-aged men and women, to older ones with the gray about their temples, to young men and women, to happy-hearted boys and girls, who are lingering concerning the highest things, when duty and safety and need and right and happiness and usefulness would urge them to cease such lingering.

If I speak to some who are lingering to-night with regard to the highest and all-important matters, oh, for you would I send out my most earnest entreaty, and to GOD would I lift up my heart, that your lingering may cease, and cease before too much has been lost - yea, before all has been lost.

This case of Lot has in it many lessons, but two or three emerge from the story, to which I would now call your attention. May the Divine spirit help me, and may He help you, that speaker and people alike may do GOD's will in this service!

You will notice, first of all, what this man Lot did. One little word describes it. He "**lingered.**" After he knew his duty and had been told of his danger, yet he "**lingered.**"

That is Satan's supreme masterpiece with which to deceive and to destroy mankind.

It lurks in the little word "**linger.**" Satan's supreme scheme to blind men and women and mislead them, and seduce them from the right path, and utterly defeat them and destroy them, is stated in that one little word, "**linger.**"

One who had fearful melancholia dreamed that he died and went away to that world of waste and loss and night, the name of which is hell, and that down there he saw and heard the conclave of evil spirits in that world of waste, as these evil spirits counselled and plotted how they might best destroy the world of surging people, who had not yet died.

And in his dream; he said, one proposed: "Let us go back to the world and say everywhere 'There is no GOD.' And if we can get that fixed in the minds and hearts of the people, that there is no GOD, we will have them utterly unanchored and at sea, and we shall destroy them."

But the other evil spirits answered in a chorus: "We cannot win with that." The fool hath said in

his heart, "No God." And, oh, what a foolish person he is!

It would be far more reasonable for you to say that this watch, with its machinery, all regular and orderly, just happened, than for you to say that this great world, with its order and symmetry and harmony, peopled with living, rational, human beings, just happened, and that no GOD was behind all and the Creator of all.

So the evil spirit said: "We cannot win with that theory."

And then another one proposed: "Let us go back to the world, and everywhere sow down the subtle suggestion that the Bible is an untrustworthy book, and if we can dislodge the confidence of the people in the Bible as GOD's Book, His God-breathed revelation to men, they will be at sea, and we can win them and destroy them."

But the evil spirits answered in a chorus, so the dreamer tells us, that they could not win with any such plea as that. Every effort has been made to destroy the Bible, but in vain. Men have bound it. Men have burned it. Men have chained it. Men have done all that they could to get rid of the Bible, but its leaves are scattered to the four winds of the earth. Above all, it is hidden in human hearts. So the evil spirits said: "We cannot win with that. We cannot thus get rid of the Bible."

Then another one said: "This is my suggestion. Let us go back to earth, and say to mankind everywhere that there is no such world as hell, the world of waste, the world of loss, the world of soul defeat, no such place as that. Let us say it everywhere.

"Let us say that GOD is too merciful and good to allow anybody to be destroyed and lost, and let us teach that everywhere, and then with that subtle doctrine of deception we will mislead and destroy the world." But the evil spirits answered in a chorus: "We cannot win with that." Down in the human conscience is written the consciousness that as men sow, so shall they reap. Men know that. Men know that vice and virtue cannot have the same harvest. Men know that a praying, God-fearing, God-serving man must have a different harvest from a man who neglects GOD, and is prayerless, and flagrantly disobeys GOD, and puts Him out of his life. There is a difference in the harvest, and, men know it. So they said: "We cannot win with that. Down in the human consciousness there is a little monitor called conscience, that makes its painful insistence that as men sow, so shall they reap. We cannot win with that doctrine."

And then one of the evil spirits, so the dreamer tells us, rose up after a moment and said: "Eureka! Eureka! I have it! I have it! Let us go back to the world and say everywhere that there is a GOD, and that men are responsible to Him, and that the Bible is His Book, the revelation of His will, the signboard to point men in the upward way; and let us say that there is a world of waste and defeat, the name of which is hell, which responsible human beings shall have for their home, if they turn away from GOD's proffered mercy, and refuse to accept Him as He stretches out His hand with forgiveness and salvation; say that men shall die, and shalt be their own destroyers.

But when you have said all that, say one more word, and say it everywhere. Say to sinners everywhere just this one word: "Time enough yet!"

And then the dreamer said that all hell applauded, for that was the Masterpiece concocted by

Satan to destroy the world.

That is Satan's Masterpiece to destroy the world!

He comes with his subtle suggestion, saying: "Be not in any haste about religion. Don't be anxious about that really important matter just yet. Linger about it. Take time about it. Delay about it. Procrastinate. Time enough yet!" And with that fearful, specious teaching, Satan is destroying men and women about us as nothing else can and does destroy the needy children of men.

Oh, may I come this evening and pause by the heart of every life in all this great press, and as a personal friend - for I would be that to every human being on this earth, to help him if I might - may I pause there and ask you: "Is not this matter about which you linger entirely too important for you to continue such lingering? Isn't the matter of your soul's duty and safety and need and welfare a matter too important for you to keep on lingering?"

Suppose that you were involved in some important business transaction, and I should come to you and propose that we go to the sea, or to the mountains, for two weeks of recreation and rest, and that you leave all that and come with me, you would look at me and say: "I should like to go, and under ordinary conditions, perhaps I might go, but I am just now passing the papers for an important trade. Both sides are ready to sign them up, and I cannot leave until all this is closed."

And suppose I come back and urge you: "You can put that away. That can wait. It can wait a week or ten days, and when you come back you can sign the papers and pass them and have it all concluded." You would stare at me as you wondered if I were not utterly abnormal, in the face of all that you had told me about the readiness to close the transactions that had been having your attention.

Suppose that there were illness in your body, serious in its encroachments, and the doctor came and looked you over and said: "You must immediately give your case attention. I find serious, even ominous signs in your body. You must immediately give your case attention." How unreasonable for you to laugh in his face, and put his warning away, and go as of yore! You say: "Certainly, either would be unreasonable, of the illustrations you have named." And yet I come to-night to talk to you about the lingering of your soul with reference to its highest claims and duties and needs. Tell me, can it be reasonable for you to linger over that?

Was not JESUS right when He said: "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you?**" Was not JESUS pre-eminently right years ago, in some special meetings, I became deeply interested in a young law student, who was going away presently to the law school at Austin. I sought him out for a quiet interview and said to him: "What are you going to do about this first question, the call of JESUS to be your Saviour and the Master of your life?"

He said: "I have definitely decided, in these meetings, that it is the sanest thing in the world to be the friend and follower of JESUS; and I have gone on further and decided that just as soon as I get my diploma from the law school at Austin, straightway I am going to seek the Saviour and begin serving Him."

You know what I said to him: "What if you do not come back from the law school at all? What if you never complete your law preparation at all? What if those three years are not to be allowed you? Hadn't you better make sure now of the supreme matter? With your wits about you, calm and clear, hadn't you better make the supremest decision ever allowed a human soul to make, namely, to say, 'Yes, Lord JESUS, who died for sinners, I yield to Thee. Save me, and from this hour guide me in thine own way.' Hadn't you better take that first step now, and let these smaller matters be properly related to such pivotal decision?"

And then, after he had waited a moment or two, he looked up into my face and said: "I will take that first step right now. Right now I surrender to CHRIST. I will confess Him in the public service this evening." And he did so confess Him that very evening, and a few days later went away to the State University law school at Austin. It was less than three months until his body came back to North Texas in a casket. Only one short week of pneumonia had hurried him from time into death and the grave. He had chosen the better part before it was too late. Oh, men and women, oughtn't you to put first things first?

And tell me again, isn't this matter of lingering a matter that vexes you the more it is crowded upon you? What pleasure is there in indecision? How terrible a thing for us to be continually agitated with a big question that must be decided, and yet we are not decided!

This man Lot did not find lingering pleasant, for the Bible tells us that "**he vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,**" as he went drifting with the tide. Tell me, can there be any pleasure in lingering with reference to the most important question that you will ever face?

Here is a question that is inescapable. Do something with JESUS you must, you will. Now, can it be pleasant to you to say: "I will keep putting Him off, and saying no, and lingering with respect to His call, and putting it indefinitely away?" Can that be a thing to please your mind? How terrible a thing is the spirit of indecision with reference to any question!

Oh, I would pause at every lingering heart here to-night, and look up into your faces, as a friend, and probe you with questions as to why you linger about the most urgently important matter of all! Do you tell me: "Sir, I am lingering because I have no interest in religion at all?" Oh, no! Not one in this place, I think, makes answer like that. Not one in this place looks me now in the face saying: "That matter of CHRIST's call has in it no appeal for me, and that matter of my soul's welfare does not interest me a jot." Nobody here makes a suicidal answer like that.

Time and again you have thought about being saved, about having your sins forgiven, about being right with GOD, about being ready if the summons should come to go hence, ready for whatever should come. Time and again you have thought of all that. Time and again your heart has had its deep and serious hours of reflection and high purpose. Time and again you have said: "I must give this matter of personal religion the right attention." Time and again you have written down the resolve: "I must by and by look after this first question of all, even the salvation of my soul."

Oh, it is not that you do not care that you linger - it is not that.

Is it this - does somebody say: "I am lingering because I cannot see how it is that one is born again; I cannot understand the philosophy of how a soul is saved by a crucified and risen Saviour?" Do you say that is why you linger, because you cannot understand how it is that one is saved? Neither do I understand it. Neither does anybody else.

The wisest Christian philosopher on the face of the earth cannot explain to you how it is that one is born again. The how of everything is veiled with mystery. The lowest form of life is utterly impossible of analysis and explanation by the greatest thinker and philosopher of all.

And here the highest form of life - spiritual life - life which GOD gives the soul that accepts CHRIST as a Saviour - that highest form of life is utterly impossible, in the way that it is imparted to man, of human comprehension or understanding.

That scholarly man who came to JESUS, when JESUS was here in the flesh, one evening when the twilight had gone and nightfall had come - that fine man, Nicodemus, who came to JESUS to talk with Him about these spiritual matters, when JESUS told him, "**You must be born again, or you cannot even see the kingdom of God,**" said just what you and I have said - "how can one be born again?"

Mark JESUS' answer: "**The wind bloweth where it listeth**" - that is, where it pleaseth - "**and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the spirit.**"

You and I are to come confessing our sins, and turning from them by repentance - forsaking them, renouncing them, and to make honest, absolute surrender of our poor, sinful lives to CHRIST, saying to Him: "Saviour, I give up to Thee. Save me thy way." And He will grant His forgiveness, and He will by His own divine power give us that new birth, without which one must ever remain blind concerning CHRIST's great salvation.

That nobly gifted editor of Atlanta, Georgia, Henry V Grady, a great publicist, a thrilling orator, a humanity-serving citizen, one of the South's most honored sons, got far away, right in the zenith of his power and popularity, from CHRIST. Like many others similarly situated, he neglected the things of CHRIST and drifted with the tide. Far back yonder when he was a boy, he made a profession of religion, and for awhile observed the religious habits, but when his remarkable fame and career came on, he neglected the Christian life, and went drifting with the tide. They told me, when I was speaking in Atlanta some years ago, this beautiful chapter out of his great life.

When he had made one of his loftiest speeches, on one occasion, and plaudits from North, South, East and West were coming to him on every wire, he slipped out of the office of "*The Constitution*," his daily paper in Atlanta, saying to his associates as he left: "You need not know where I am, but I am going to find mother to-night in the little home. I have something to say to her. I will be back in the morning. You need not know where I am."

And he took an out-of-the-way road to his mother's cottage, and when he reached it, he said to his mother: "Mother, all these plaudits, all this fame, all this notoriety, all this popularity, all this



applause - that does not satisfy my heart. Mother, I once thought that I was a Christian, but if I was, I have got far away from GOD, and I have come back, mother, to ask you if I may not kneel down at your knee, and by a little boy again, like I was when I was at home with you, and say my simple prayer, like I used to say it every day when the day was done. And then, when I have said my prayer like that, I wonder if you won't take me to my bed, and tuck the cover around me, just like you used to do when I was a little boy, and then, when you have tucked the cover around me, if you won't bend down over me and pray for your little boy, for GOD to teach him and guide him and help him, just like you used. to pray for me when I was a little boy."

And that is exactly what happened in that little home that night.

Great Henry Grady knelt at his mother's knee, like he used to do as a little boy, and said his simple, boyish prayer, like he used to say it long years before, and then his dear old mother escorted him to his room and bed, and she tucked the cover about him, and bent over him, with tears and prayers, commending her boy to the great Saviour.

And then she kissed him, like she used to do, and left him alone. And in the gray of the early morning, Henry Grady came from his room, and found his mother, and there was a light on his face fair like the morning light, and he said: "Mother, I was a little child last night, and felt out after JESUS, and He met me and has spoken peace to my poor, wandering heart."

Oh, souls not right with GOD, come as little children to Him, this evening! Be a little child and come to JESUS.

Oh, lawyer, over there, or doctor, or carpenter, or merchant!

Oh, wandering man or woman, with your mind all puzzled and perplexed and shot through with the questions, be a little child to-night, and say: "Lord JESUS, I know that I have moral lapse and loss and sin in my life, and that I do not have moral resources within myself sufficient to be the man or woman I ought to be. Lord JESUS, I will surrender to Thee. Save me thy way."

And, as the Lord lives, He will save you this very night. Oh, do not linger, but come to Him! **"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."**

The chief reason, I summon you to remember, why souls are lost is wrapped up in that word "lingering," that word "delay," that word "tomorrow," that word "procrastination."

**"He lingered."**

He just lingered, and the ill-fated results followed. And while you and I linger, convictions within us get feebler and fainter, even every hour we linger. And while we linger, our desires and impressions, kindled within us by the truth and spirit of GOD, yet resisted by us, wane and get less and less.

- And while we linger, the difficulties strengthen about us and multiply.
- While we linger, habit hardens and character crystallizes

- while we linger. Oh, the tragedy of it!

The naturalists tell us about a little plant called the "sensitive plant," the most sensitive plant, they tell us, that grows in all the vegetable world. You may touch that little plant, and it will vibrate in every limb and leaf, as with the vibrations of some fine-stringed violin. You may keep on touching it, and it will vibrate every time you touch it, but less and less and less, every time you give it a touch. Keep on touching it, and there it vibrates, perceptibly, but the vibrations are less, they are fewer, they are slower, with every touch.

After awhile that sensitive plant, under the repeated touches, refuses to vibrate any more. The plant has at last been touched to death, and there it hangs, in every limb and leaf and tendril, all flabby and unresponsive. It has at last been touched to death.

Oh, human soul, that soul of yours is more sensitive than the finest stringed violin! More sensitive is that soul than the vegetable plant that I have just described.

- And that soul is touched,
- that soul is called,
- that soul is played upon,
- that soul feels,
- that soul vibrates,
- that soul responds,
- that soul argues,
- that soul trembles,
- but that soul lingers.

Now! Satan does not care how much you tremble, nor how much you feel, if you will only linger, for lingering is the way of doom and failure and death.

GOD give you to cease your lingering, GOD give you to stop your lingering, this very hour! Oh, Breath Divine, bestir these lingering souls, that their lingering now may cease!

There is another thought in the text, to which we now advance, far more serious than this first thought, to which your earnest attention has just been called: Lot's lingering doomed other lives, even those of his own heart and home. Oh, that is to my mind the most awful thought to be contemplated by the human mind.

*Lot's lingering doomed his family.* You read there the story in all its contextual relations, and you will see how Lot's lingering dragged that family of his down into the deepest ditch of ruin and defeat. Lot went to his sons-in-law, when at last he was awakened to get out of the city, called thereto by the warning of the angels, and he said to those sons-in-law that they must hasten, for danger was imminent and overwhelming for the city.

And those sons-in-law laughed him to scorn. They mocked him to his face. They called him an old dotard. He had lingered too late, he had waited too long, and his influence was contemptible with those sons-in-law, when at last he sought to recover and save them. And even Lot's wife, warned solemnly not to look back as they made their haste from the city, looked back and met her ill-fated doom. Oh, Lot, head of the house, if thou hadst been the man thou oughtest to have

been, that woman would not have looked back, and that fate would not have come! Thy lingering hast wrought her doom!

And then Lot went on with only two of his children, two daughters, and the after-story of those two daughters is the most shocking story in all this Holy Bible. Lot's house went down, wrecked and doomed and lost, because Lot lingered.

That is the most terrible picture in all the Holy Bible.

It brings you and me face to face again with the awful power of human influence. One person helps another or hurts another, just by human influence.

Gladstone never wearied of saying: "One example is worth a thousand arguments."

Your example and mine every day takes people up or takes them down. Oh, influence, influence!

Is there any other question quite so serious in the world for human minds to contemplate?

JESUS gives the picture of one who causes through his influence somebody else to stumble and miss the right way: "**It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.**"

- Oh, parent, is your child going the broad way because of you?

- Oh, friend, is your friend or acquaintance going the broad way because of your position, your influence, your example?

Oh, soul, for your own sake, first, personal religion is the supreme claim, and then for the sake of others, whom you must hurt or help, whom you must take up or drag down, you must not, dare not, be careless about your influence. And the supreme influence is the influence of example.

I was speaking awhile ago in one of our Southern cities, and one of the members of the National Congress was in the audience, one evening, a man of much weight and worth, but not a Christian, and that evening I was preaching on the text: "**No man liveth to himself.**"

When I gave the call for public confession of CHRIST, that congressman's conscience was probed to the depths. He acted up to the light he had, and walked down the aisle and said to me: "GOD forgive me that I did not do this when I was a young fellow, but I do it at last!" And no sooner had he done that than it looked as if half the congregation would follow him down the aisles - young men, and middle-aged men, and boys - as they saw that conspicuous citizen come like a little child and make his surrender to CHRIST.

Oh, soul, you intend to come. Hasten, I pray you, not simply for your own sake. For the sake of somebody sheltering behind you, waiting on you, not acting because you have not acted, hasten, I pray you, to make your return to GOD.

Now I call your attention a moment more to the instruments that were used to cause Lot to give his lingering.

*GOD sent His angels to Lot to warn him, to beseech him, to counsel him to give up his lingering, to leave that place of wrong relations, where his feet were fast in the mire. GOD sent angels to help Lot. Whom has He sent to help you and me? His messengers are many.*

Angels, I doubt not, for the Bible teaches it, play a significant part in human lives. But there are other messengers that GOD sends, and they are near at hand, and you and I may perceive them and know them.

There is the Holy Bible. Oh, what an influence the Bible has, with its pungent calls to men!

*Sometimes just one sentence grips the human conscience and turns it away from darkness to light, from the wrong road to the right. Call to mind some of its pungent words: "Prepare to meet thy God." "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near." "For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" "How will thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." With Scriptures like these, the human conscience often is probed, and turned by even one sentence of Scripture, from the wrong to the right way.*

*And then how often GOD sends us His messenger of preaching. Oh, what strange effects has preaching!*

Many a time the preacher is thought by the hearer to be personal, to be acquainted with all that is in the hearer's life, and to be actually describing the life of the hearer, and the hearer winces under such personal description.

Time and again men have sought me out as I have left my pulpit, and have said to me alone: "Who told you about my condition, that you laid it bare here to-day?" And I have said: "Why, I never heard of your condition. No living soul has ever breathed a word to me about your condition."

They said: "What then does it all mean?" And I have answered: "It means that GOD knows about it, and GOD has guided His preacher, who said: 'Lord, the preacher does not know what to preach, but thou knowest. Give him the message which thou will take and apply to the human conscience,' and GOD took the message and with it found the human conscience."

What strange effects preaching has! One wrote me this from Birmingham, Alabama, the other night: "I heard you when you laid bare my case in that sermon. Somebody had told you all. I went back to the hotel, in your city, but could not sleep, and I took the train and have reached Birmingham, and here in the hotel in Birmingham, at midnight, I have found CHRIST, and I am writing to tell you that your sermon was not in vain. I wonder who told you about me." Nobody told me about him. I had never before heard of him. I did not know he was in the audience.

But the omniscient GOD knew he was in the audience, and sent the message and fitted it home to his heart by the Divine spirit, who shows the soul the way from darkness to light.

*Sometimes, oftentimes, GOD's messenger is home influence.*

Did you ever hear Dr. Torrey, the far-famed evangelist, tell what an awful unbeliever he was when he was a young man, how he went to the deepest depths of infidelity and scouted everything - the Bible, CHRIST, God, Heaven, hell, immortality-everything like that? And his dear mother yearned after him, and loved him, and pleaded with him, and prayed for him, and after awhile he said to his mother: "I am tired of it all, and I am going to leave and not bother you any more, and you will not see me any more. I am tired of it all." She followed him to the door, and followed him to the gate; pleading and praying and loving and weeping, and then at last she said, as her final word: "Son, when you come to the darkest hour of all, and everything seems lost and gone, if you will honestly call on your mother's GOD, you will get help."

He went his way in his darksome and terrible infidelity.

Deeper down he went, day in and out, and month in and out. And he said the months went by, and he was 427 miles from his mother's home, in a hotel. in a certain town, unable to sleep, wearied with his sins and wearied with life, and he at last rose up in the early morning, and said: "I will get out of this bed, and I will take the gun there from my valise, and I will put it to my temple, and I will end this farce called human life."

And as he got out of bed to do that dreadful thing, the last word that his mother had said came back to him: "Son, when your darkest hour of all comes, and everything seems lost, call in sincerity on your mother's GOD, and you will get help."

And Torrey said he fell beside his bed and said: "Oh, GOD of my mother, if there is such a Being, I want light, and if thou will give it, no matter how, I will follow it." He had light within a few moments, and hastened back home. And, to follow the story just a moment more, he said that when he got back home, thinking he would surprise his mother and come upon her unexpectedly, she came down the walk to the gate, laughing and crying with uncontrollable joy, and said: "Oh, my boy, I know why you are coming back, and I know what you have to tell. You have found the Lord. GOD has told me so."

- Oh, the power of a mother's prayer!
- Oh, the power of a Father's prayer,
- Oh, the power of a brother's prayer, a sister's prayer!
- Oh, the power of a wife's prayer, when she links herself with GOD!

And full many a time GOD's good angel to bring one back from the darksome and downward way is somebody's prayer, who says: "Lord, spare this soul a little longer. Give this soul a little more respite, a little more time."

Prayer, how mighty it is before GOD when it is sincerely offered!

*Sometimes it is evidence that calls out.*

- Sometimes it is a providence that calls you.
- Sometimes GOD's blessings come robed in black.
- Sometimes sickness terrible is at the gate, at the door, within the house.

- Sometimes a loved one's life hangs on a thread.
- Sometimes your own life has been hanging on a thread.

And through all these providences, GOD is saying: "Set your house in order, and do it in time. Do it before it is too late. Do it while you may. Cease your lingering, and come to GOD."

*And over it all, and through it all, and above it all, GOD's good spirit is the chief agent of all to woo men and win them to come to CHRIST. Every desire in your heart to be right with GOD was put there by His good spirit. Oh, do not resist that light-bringing, life-giving spirit, I beseech you!*

Now I am coming to ask you, won't you refuse to go on with your lingering? Won't you cease from your lingering and come the upward way? Won't you this hour rise up with a grand decision? How grand decision is!

In one great hour Esau lost all by a wrong decision, and in one great hour beautiful Esther gained all by a right decision.

How grand decision is!

Won't you summon yourself with a fixed decision and say: "My lingering in the wrong road, exposing and imperiling my soul and my influence over others, stops to-night, and I make my return to GOD!"

Won't you thus cease your lingering?

Won't you end your delay?

Won't you stop that cry about "to-morrow," about "by and by," and say: "It shall be to-night for me that I make my return to GOD!"

Oh, I pray you, linger not too late!

I was in Galveston preaching, before that first horrible storm came years ago, the awfulness of which made the whole world stand aghast. I was there just a little while before that storm, preaching in a series of meetings, and when I came to the last night service that I could attend, I pleaded longer than usual that night, thus hoping to reach five men who had heard me several nights.

Other men came forward, confessing Christ, but none of those five.

When the people had stood up at my summons for the benediction, I turned to them to plead again, remembering it was my last service: "Won't those men who have waited come now?" And one of them started, and came down the aisle, announcing his decision for CHRIST. And then I said: "Won't others come?" And a second one came and stood by me, at my invitation.

And then I said again: "Won't others come?" And a third one of those men came and stood beside me. Then I waited and said: "Won't other men, who know they ought to surrender to

CHRIST, ought for every high motive that can move a thinking man to take a great step, won't you take that step and come? " And the other two men stepped out into the aisle and came forward, and we had all five of them. In a moment or two I dismissed the audience, and soon was hurrying on an outbound train for my home.

And then, in a few weeks, came that fearful storm that swept thousands of people into the engulfing waters. Later, when I got in touch with a friend over the long distance phone, to ask what I could do for him and his, he said:

"Do you remember how you pleaded in your meeting that last night?"

I said: "Surely, I can never forget it."

"Do you remember how you lifted up your voice and sent it out for the five waiting men?"

I said: "Yes; tell me what has happened to them."

And then I heard the sob in his throat, as he said: "All five of them, sir, have gone down in the whelming flood and are drowned."

And then, as I waited a moment more, he said, with a sob distinctly audible: "Oh, sir, what if you had not pleaded a little longer? What if they had not come?" And I ask again: What if they had not come?

What if you do not come before it is too late? What if you linger one second too long? Linger one second too long to come to CHRIST is as ruinous as lingering an eternity too long. Oh, this Tuesday night, won't you cease your lingering and say: "My decision is given?"

Do you remember the description given of Cortez's invasion into Mexico, long ago, when there was such destruction wrought by such invasion that ill-fated night? Do you remember the description given of that awful night by the historian who sets out the story? Three little words stand out to tell the fearful story: "The sad night!"

Oh, Saviour, is this to be that sad night about which some soul here shall have to say: "I heard. I felt. I knew. I was taught. I ought to have acted. I knew it well. I said, 'I will linger.' I said, 'I will wait.' I said, 'Not yet.'" Shall it be written down concerning you: "The sad night!"

God forbid! Be not afraid to surrender to CHRIST. Be not afraid to decide it. Be not afraid, little girl; be not afraid, my boy, to say "Yes" to CHRIST. He saves.

If you trust Him, He will take you and save you. Be not afraid, oh, man or woman, young or older, or even aged; be not afraid to make your surrender to CHRIST. Be not afraid, oh, duty-neglecting Christian, to rise up with a fixed resolve and retrace your steps and say: "I will redeem the time. I will renew my vows with JESUS."

Be not afraid, oh, backslidden Christian, far out in the cold and in the night; be not afraid to return now to the forgiving Saviour. JESUS' invitation to the wanderer is sweeter than the strains of an aeolian harp. Whosoever to-night, in all this place, wrong with GOD, in the church or out,

who wishes to be right with Him may be absolutely assured that JESUS waits to be gracious unto all such persons, and to bless and to save them. If your heart has given its acceptance of CHRIST as your personal Saviour, and you have not yet made it known, or if your heart now makes such acceptance of Him, come before all the people, while now we sing, to tell us of your decision that He shall be yours and you shall be His, today and forever.

### THE CLOSING PRAYER

And now, Holy Father, as the people go, take thou these who come confessing their return to CHRIST, their surrender to Him, and make life glorious for them from to-night. Let every saved soul grow stronger and stronger, because it rests utterly on CHRIST to save, and follow obediently all the light He gives. And may the soul be so fortified with CHRIST's own conscious grace and help that from to-night each of these shall go to live in the most victorious way for CHRIST.

And the Lord grant, as now we separate, that there may be bound upon every heart in this place, all through this throng, the worth and weight of eternal matters, in such an impressive way, that every one in this place who is wrong with CHRIST, may to-night, with whole-heartedness, seek to be right with Him. Set before every heart here the assuring promise: "**In the day thou seekest me with thy whole heart, I will be found of Thee.**"

May this be that day for all this throng! Deepen this work of saving grace in all our hearts, our great Saviour - mightily deepen it in all our hearts - so that we shall have hearts burning with passion and compassion for souls about us, even as CHRIST would have us think and feel and act toward them and for them. And give us to speak the word in season to them, and to pray the prayer acceptable before Thee in their behalf, as the hours come and go.

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 15 ~

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