

# UP FROM SIN

The Fall and Rise of a Prodigal  
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by

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESOLUTION IN ACTION

**“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father.”** (Luke 15:18-20).

He was still in the gutter when we left our young man in our last address. But a great change had taken place in him. He had come to himself. He was thinking. We took great comfort from this fact, believing it to be a cause for rejoicing to find any young man engaged in serious thought. Oh, that more men would think! A young man with early advantages equal to the best was recently made to pay the penalty of an awful crime upon the gallows. His confession was a great sermon.

“Young men,” said he, “early in life I formed the habit of drink. I was urged by friends and loved ones to stop, but I was hard-headed and would not. Step by step I went deeper and deeper in sin. I became desperate, and cared not for God or man. The crime for which I am to die was committed by me. I am not ready to die. I am now breaking the heart of a good mother. Don’t charge her with blame. She did her part. But, oh, me! Put the blame upon my shoulders. I did not think it would lead to this.”

Poor boy! He needed to stop and think. How many a scandal would be prevented, if we could only get men and women to think!

But the prodigal didn’t stop with thinking. Thinking would do no good in itself. So often it is true of us, that we stop with the mere making of a resolution. I expect if all the good resolutions of this audience were put into one book they would make a volume as big as a pictorial history of the world. Luther Benson said he resolved in the presence of witnesses thirty times in one month to quit whiskey, and each time broke over. How many times we have resolved to no effect! But the prodigal did not stop with resolving, **“He arose and came to his father.”**

He put his good resolution into action. And it is this thought specially that I want to impress upon your minds coming out of our analysis of the basis of success.

## EXECUTION VS. THEORY

Success in any department of life is not only dependent upon good resolutions, but right action. That is to say, it is just as essential to execute wisely as to plan wisely.

First, in business. Alexander the Great, when asked the secret of his success in military life, said: "In not delaying when I decided."

Caesar said to his men once: "To fail to act is to die."

A great French writer says: "No man thinks gloriously who fails to act gloriously."

The apostle says: "**Faith without works is dead.**"

What does this mean? It means only to say that however high and noble our thoughts may be, unless they find expression in the manner of our living they are of no avail.

Let us illustrate this necessity by looking at the history of some great men and movements.

Solomon De Cause, a Norman, first discovered the power of steam to move a vessel. His mind was so full of the scheme that he was judged crazy, and died in prison. Watts came upon the scene, applied Dr. Cause's theory, and reaped the glory.

Draper, more than fifty years ago, decided that it was possible to tap the surrounding membrane of the heart and relieve that dread disease known as heart dropsy; but it remained for another surgeon of decided less ability in many respects to execute this theory and reap the reward.

The mere theorist can never be a success. A story is told of Sir Thomas More, who was wild on the subject of psychology. One day, his intimate friend, Erasmus, called to see him. It was a very hot summer day. Sir Thomas argued with Erasmus that as you believe a thing, so it will be. Finally Erasmus must leave. And going away, he went to Sir Thomas' stable, saddled his riding pony, leaving his cane by the trough, with this note.

"Remember, sir, you told me,  
Believe and 'twill be;  
Believe a thing's a body,  
And a body you'll see.

"So should you tire walking  
This hot summer tide,  
Believe this staff is Dobbin,  
And straightway you'll ride."

When Sir Thomas went out that evening and found this note, and his horse gone, he studied for a moment, and said, "Any theory is true, provided – , " and he never finished the proviso. It is action that makes success. Don't forget that.

Many a businessman has failed because he did not have the power to execute. That is why we have so many financial graveyards around boomed towns and cities today. Men were theorists, and not practical.

### **CHARACTER BUILDING**

Second, in character building. The most important subject that can engage the attention of any young man is the building of his character. It has been said, "He builds a great thing who builds pyramids; but he builds a greater thing who builds a character."

It is a great thing for a man to paint fine pictures and carve noble statues, but Michel Angelo's frescoes in the great Sistine Temple are not to be compared to the wondrous frescoes that are possible to be done inside the walls of the human heart. Everything depends upon your character. You cannot afford to fail in the formation of character. And here, as in business, good intentions amount to nothing unless we have right action.

### **THINK LIKE A SAINT, ACT LIKE A DEVIL**

We often hear such expressions as, "It makes little difference what you do, if you believe right." This is false. Think like a saint and act like a devil! Pilate believed right about Christ. He said he found no fault in Him; but we condemn Pilate because he didn't have the wisdom or the manhood to act upon his convictions. Good thoughts and right conduct must go hand in hand in the formation of good character.

Take up your bad habits, young men. How many times you have said, "Shame upon me; I'll quit"; and yet you have gone right on in the same thing.

### **BEATING A TRAIN**

I have heard of a young man out West who one day bet some other young men that he could manage a freight train in a very novel way. Taking his handkerchief out of his pocket, he jumped upon the track, and as the train came around the bend he waved his handkerchief and shouted stop! The engineer, seeing him, reversed his engine, blew for brakes, and came to a standstill. Meanwhile the young chap ran off into the woods without saying a word.

The next day his companions bet him again that he could not succeed. The bet was accepted. The time came. The train was coming. He jumped on the track and repeated the performance of the first day with the same success.

So again they bet him that it could not be done, and again the challenge was accepted. This time an old man came up, and said:

"Young man, you had better stop playing the fool."

"Well, said the boy, "I am going to stop after this time."

So he went on. He did as before. The engineer had gotten tired of his folly, and instead of reversing his engine, seemed to pull wider open the throttle. On came the train, and he was pitched twenty feet down an embankment.

When they gathered around him to see him die, he said in a low, sad tone,

“I’m going to quit after this.”

Oh, how true to many of us – “going to quit tomorrow!”

Sometime ago a great bank scandal was discovered, and a prominent family brought to shame. The man knew he was wrong, and, as he said, had intended for ten years to replace that money before it was found out; but he failed to do it.

Young men, in your character-forming, which is one of the most important considerations of life, I call you now to right action. Start about it now. The longer you wait the harder to come back.

### THE CROWNING ACT

Third, in religion. The crowning act in the drama of life is the return to God from a life of sin and unbelief. Even a character ever so good, which is built upon any other foundation than this, will fail in the end. Jesus is a rock upon which, if a man build, he will stand.

To such He is a sure defender. He need not fear though the world turn its back upon him. I love to think of such blessed assurance as Isaiah 41:10:

**“Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”**

Yes, there is no occasion for fear if Jesus is our strength. I am afraid that this is the reason why we have so many cowards today in the Lord’s work; they do not rest upon Christ.

Young man, have you trouble in keeping out of sin? Do these old habits continue to haunt you? Are you now afraid you can’t hold out should you take the “new” step? Rest your hopes upon Jesus. He is not only able, but willing.

Listen to the experience of an old veteran, the apostle Paul:

**“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Do you want any better testimony than this? Arise, then! Come home to your Father. Lay your sins at His feet.

“From every stormy wind that blows,  
From every swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat –  
‘This found beneath the mercy seat.

“There is a place where Jesus sheds  
The oil of gladness on our heads –  
A place of all on earth most sweet;  
It is the blood-bought mercy seat.

“There is a scene where spirits blend,  
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;  
Though sundered far, by faith they meet  
Around one common mercy seat.

“There, there on eagle wings we soar,  
And sin and sense molest no more,  
And heaven comes down our souls to great,  
And glory crowns the mercy seat.”

But not only does Christ as your foundation furnish you strength for service, but He enables you to be of the highest service to others. And I am tempted just here to give an account of the experience of a young lady, as published a short time ago. It conveys to my mind so completely the mission of life, and the importance of right action even in little things.

“Ruth, I have tickets for the concert of the Bell-ringers on Wednesday night; can you go?” Alice said to a friend, as she stopped at her gate.

“It is prayer-meeting night.”

“I know; but they sail for Europe Friday night, and this is their last concert.”

“But I never stay from prayer-meetings for anything.”

“But this is a sacred concert – and only once. We can worship just as well there.”

So, reluctantly, against her convictions, Ruth consented.

That night the girl dreamed that an angel in shining raiment stood beside her, and asked, gently:

“Where are you going tomorrow night?”

And she answered: “I thought I would go to the concert.”

Then the angel said, sadly, “Have you so little appreciation of the value of a single soul?”

Vividly the vision came back to Ruth the next morning, as she lay, saying softly to herself, wondering what it could mean, "So little appreciation of the value of a single soul."

She decided that she must take back her promise to go to the concert, and go to the prayer meeting. She sat in the house of prayer with a strange joy in her soul, singing "Plenteous Grace."

"Plenteous grace with thee is found,  
Grace to pardon all my sin;  
Let the healing streams abound,  
Make and keep me pure within.  
Thou of life the fountain art,  
Freely let me take of thee;  
Spring thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity."

As the music ceased, the girl sprang impulsively to her feet.

"I meant to hear the Bell-ringers tonight," she said, "but I decided I would rather go to prayer-meeting, and I am happier here than I would have been at the concert, and I am sure no music could be sweeter than the hymn we have just sung."

At the hour for closing drew near, the pastor rose and invited any who would give themselves to Christ to come forward. As he waited in silence, a lady in mourning walked slowly up the aisle, and kneeling, was shown the way of salvation.

Much astonished, the girl went to receive the introduction to Mrs. Walters.

"I wanted to tell you," the lady said, "that I owe the fact of my being a Christian tonight to your testimony. I have not been inside a church for ten years. I came here to please a friend, and when you said you had given up a concert for a prayer-meeting, and that no music could be sweeter to you than the hymn, 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul,' I thought to myself, 'There must be something in religion, and I am going to have it.' So I wish to thank you that it is because of your testimony I shall go home tonight a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ruth held out her hand, and pressed gratefully that of her new friend. She knew how the meaning of the angel's message. She could not tell Mrs. Walters how nearly she had come to proving recreant to her trust nor of the dream that had influenced her in the true direction, so she answered, simply:

"I thank you for telling me this. I shall not forget it."

Yet she little guessed what cause she would always have to remember it.

Ruth's home was close beside a railroad track. About midnight she was awakened by a horrible crashing sound. Looking through the window, she could see where the midnight express and the 11:30 freight had collided.

The frantic cries of the frightened and the piercing shrieks of the wounded made her shudder. But she bravely put away all thoughts of self, and, calling her father, was soon ready to go with him to the rescue. And the first face that looked into hers as she stood beside the burning train was that of Mrs. Walters.

Pale and peaceful it was, though showing how intensely she suffered. She was extricated, and borne to Ruth's home. The power of speech was almost gone. She rallied a little as they laid her on Ruth's couch. Taking her hand and pressing it to her lips, she whispered feebly:

"Child, I'm going – it was my last chance – what if you had not spoken – what if I had not taken it?"

And kneeling there beside the dead, the hot tears raining down her face, Ruth promised the Father always to do her duty, always to give her testimony, always to appreciate the value of a single soul.

Oh, young men, this is your highest duty, as well as your most gracious privilege. I insist that you shall look at it honestly and faithfully. Surely every man wants success. Roman history tells of an officer who served forty years in service of his country; fought one hundred and twenty successful battles; won fourteen civic crowns; but when he came to die, he directed that they should be destroyed. Said he, "I've lived for the wrong cause."

Is there a conviction in your soul now that you ought to come home? Don't sit and think longer, but up and make the journey. Start home now.

**~ end of chapter 5 ~**

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