

GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

Copyright © 1898

SERMON THIRTEEN

DO NOT DELAY REPENTANCE

While this damp night is keeping many away, let us who are here be earnest and prayerful. I have scarcely ever seen a rainy night during revival meetings that were not better than any other nights of the meeting in results and in blessing upon the congregation. I naturally take it for granted this congregation is in earnest — that you are here for good. And now let us be prayerful, and let us expect, each of us, for himself, just such a blessing on our hearts as we need. If it is a blessing of consecration on the part of Christian people, let us expect that and let us not be satisfied to go away without it. If it is of pardon, justification, peace — if that is the sort of blessing we are seeking, let us look for it to-night, and let us not go away satisfied without it.

SAVING HIS TEXT FOR THE ENDING

It is usually customary for a preacher to announce his text and then discuss it. We generally read our text and then expound it. But, without any purpose or desire to be singular or odd in this case, I shall first preach the sermon and then read the text, because this text is the answer to the question I want you to spend thirty minutes with me in discussing.

This is a wonderful old book from which we get our text. It goes back to the beginning of all things, and forward to the end of all things. In the first chapter of Genesis I read of my own origin and the origin of all creation, and I read how the evening and the morning were the first day and the second day, and how at the end of the sixth day the sons of God and the angels delighted over a finished world. One chapter of this book is devoted to my origin, and the thousand chapters which follow warn me of my destiny. God devotes one chapter of this book, one page of the book, to telling me from whence I come and all the other warnings and all the other rebukes and promises and precepts of his word are but so many index fingers pointing into the great hereafter, warning me of my destiny.

I believe there is but one thing condemned in this book, and that is sin; and sin is the only thing in the universe of God that can permanently harm a soul. Disappointments may sadden me. Vexation and cares may worry me, and the thousand of the environments of earth may fret me. But there is but one thing that can permanently damage the soul, and that is sin. And, really, I don't need any enlightenment from this book or the pulpit to teach me that sin will do its most work on character, on the soul, on my present, on my future destiny.

And if it is sin that all the cannon of Heaven are turned loose upon; if it is sin that God would not have us commit; if it is sin that Heaven frowns upon, and that perdition itself would have us commit; if it is sin — then I stop and ask this question:

“Why will you continue in sin?”

SALVATION A PERSONAL MATTER

Now, we notice a moment the words of this question. They are very simple, and yet they are very forcible:

“Why will you continue in sin?”

Salvation is a personal matter. Damnation a personal matter. I can get no one to die for me; no one to be buried in my stead; no one to stand before God in my place; no one to pass into glory in my stead; no one to be damned in my place. Salvation is pre-eminently a personal matter. I am saved, if saved at all, thank God — I am saved in myself and for myself. If I am lost, it is me lost, and if every other man should make his way to God, I am shut up to the consciousness that Heaven's door is closed in my face, and that I personally am shut up in Hell forever.

Men sin in groups and go in schools and run with the multitude, but judgment is personal. Salvation is personal. You and I, if we walk into glory, will walk in just as personally and as really as if we were the only ones that left this earth for a better world. If we are damned, we shall be damned as personally as if we were the only men that the sentence of God should rest upon through all eternity. And this question means something.

THE QUESTION NARROWED DOWN

Why will you? — Not why will the church; not why will the preachers; not why will the cities; not why will States; but why will you, you, you? I don't mean the man in front of you, nor the one behind you, nor the one to your right nor your left I mean you! You!

“Why will you continue in sin?”

Now, recollect: I don't ask you how it is you have lived in sin up to this hour. I don't ask you how it happened that you were born a sinner. That might involve a theological discussion that you and I haven't the capacity to go into. I don't ask you why you have continued to live in sin up to this moment. That is a question that might involve exculpatory statements on your part that I have neither time nor disposition to listen to. The question, plainly put, is, not why you have come into this hall to-night a sinner, nor why you were born in sin, but why will you go from this hall in rebellion against God and to lead another hour of a life of sin? That's the question.

Now, some people think that sin is a something that floats around in the atmosphere. Some people think sin is a roaring lion going about seeking whom it may devour. But sin is not something in the atmosphere around, and sin is not a roaring lion on our track. Sin is an act committed. It is a deed done. It is a word spoken.

“Sin,” said the apostle, **“is a transgression of the law”** — doing something that you ought not to do and which you know you ought not to do. It is saying something that you ought not to say and which you know you ought not to say. It is the living of a life of rebellion against God, and the doing of those things that God forbids and the leaving undone those things that God commands we should do. Now, the question plainly put is:

Why will you lead this life and continue doing and saying those things and neglecting these things? Why will you?

THE PLEA OF IGNORANCE OF SIN

Now we answer first for you: Is it because you are ignorant of what sin is? Can any man in this house say, “I don't know that it is wrong to swear, and wrong to drink, and wrong to lie, and wrong to rebel, and wrong to live in darkness” when light is proffered? Can any man say that?

Can any man raised in the land of Bibles look God and angels in the face and say, “The reason I live here an impenitent sinner is because I don't know what sin is”! Will you say that?

- Have you never read in that book, **“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain”**?
- Have you never read in that book, **“Thou shalt not bear false witness”**?
- Have you never read, **“Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”**?
- Have you never read, **“He that breaketh the least commandment is guilty of all”**?

Then I ask you, friend, can you say now, or ever, that the reason you leave here impenitent to-night is because you don't know what sin is? Will you say that?

Do you know that every sinner in this land stands self-convicted on that proposition! There's not a sinner in this city that hasn't for years been criticizing the life of the church, and you know that every criticism of your lips on the life of a member of the church is incontestable proof that you know what right is, and that you know what wrong is.

You won't suffer these members of the church to do wrong, and when they do you wrong you speak of it, and point the finger of scorn at them.

The fact of the business is, the church ought to live up to the world's standard of character, and my highest aspiration in this life is for all of us to come up to where the world knows and says we ought to get up to. That's it. These sinners don't permit us to do wrong. If we do wrong they say: “That isn't right! You've promised to do right” Oh, brother! Don't let the church's standard of righteousness be lower than the standard that sinners have raised for us!

WRONG FOR PROFESSORS, WRONG FOR SINNERS

Yes, but you say, “I know it is wrong for members of the church to do that way, but is it wrong for us?”

Look here, friend! I have got as much right to get drunk to-night after service as any man in this house, God being judge, you see. I have just as much right to go and gamble to-night till 3 o'clock in the morning as any man in the house has, God being judge. I have just as much right to tell a lie to-night when I am through preaching as any man in the house has to tell a lie, God being judge. I wonder who gave you permission to do wrong. And the biggest mistake in this universe is for a man, simply because he don't belong to the church, to imagine that God has given him license to do wrong.

God doesn't look upon sin with the least allowance, and **“the soul that sinneth, it shall die,”** whether in the church or out. The only difference between men in the church and men out of the church is, the one acknowledge their obligations to live right and the others have not. That's all. You are under as many obligations to God and right, to be and to do good as I am.

Doesn't God feed you and clothe you and care for you and doesn't his sun shine upon the just and the unjust alike, and hasn't the blood of Jesus Christ been poured out for you just like it has been poured out for me? I have as much right to do wrong as any man in the world if you let God be judge.

A WHOLESOME DIFFERENCE

I know it looks worse for a member of the church to do wrong, and I'll tell you why. The difference between a member of the church and that sinner out of the church is this: That member of the church is like a white piece of canvas, and you sprinkle any kind of mud or dirt on a white piece of canvas and it shows very plainly; and that's the member of the church. But you take an old, dirty, grimy piece of canvas, and you can just rub anything you want to on it and it don't show at all. And that's the difference between a member of the church and an old sinner out of it.

If I were to go down to-night and get drunk, or if I were to get drunk on the streets of St. Louis to-morrow, the telegraph wires of the country would catch it up and it would be telegraphed all over the face of the Union, “Mr. Jones is in St. Louis, drunk.”

But there's many an old red-nosed fellow in this town gets drunk every day and nobody pays any more attention to it than they do to the sun shining. You see that's the difference between a gentleman and a vagabond! Don't you see? If I were to step out on the streets to-morrow and swear and profane the name of God, the newspapers would catch it up and declare that I was blaspheming on the streets of this city. But there are 10,000 swearers in this town who profane the name of God every day upon the streets, and people pay no attention whatever to them. Now, you see, that's just the difference between a gentleman and a vagabond? Don't you see?

A DISTINCTION IN THINGS

I'm glad this world makes distinctions. I'm glad. There's some of you won't walk down street but some vagabond will say to you, “Come in and take a drink with me.” But I can walk these streets ten years and nobody will ever ask me to take a drink. Don't you see?

This world knows who's who. I'm so glad this world will let a gentleman pass on and let him alone. I'm glad of that.

And whenever a man asks you to take a drink with him in these barrooms down here he's got you down in his book as a vagabond, and he ain't missing it much, either. You can put that down. I know the sort I used to ask when I drank. I know how I had them down, and I never misput a fellow down, for I had him down right every time. Why, there were gentlemen down in Cartersville. I would never, let 'em see me go into a grocery, much less ask 'em in. And I am so glad that a man never gets it right but what he respects virtue and sobriety, and goodness. I'm so glad of that.

No man here to-night can look the preacher in the face and say, "The reason I live here a sinner is because I don't know what sin is."

We know wrong is wrong and right is right. We know we ought not to do wrong, and we know we ought to do the right.

PLEADING IGNORANCE OF CONSEQUENCES

Well, then, I ask you again, is it because you are ignorant of the consequences of sin? Will you say that! Is there a man here who never read in that book, "**The wicked shall be turned into Hell**"?

But you say, "Forsooth, and there is no hell." I know the cry of this nineteenth century is, "There is no hell," and I am sorry to see that in all this land, where men have sworn eternal allegiance to that book, there is not one preacher in twenty to-day that will stand up and preach hell as that book asserts it. Of course, the preachers in St. Louis do, but I am speaking of preachers elsewhere. They won't do it.

Why, it is considered vulgar now, really vulgar, for a man to get up and preach hell to sinners. Don't you know that it is so? And I want to say to you this: I will take the records of the Church of God, and every preacher that had power with God and influence with men, and that brought thousands to Christ, every one of them — I run back, and I will take Bunyan, and I will take Whitfield, and I will take Jonathan Edwards, and I will take Charles G. Finney, and I will take your own leading evangelist in America, Dwight L. Moody.

I will take C. H. Spurgeon, in London, and every man that had power with God and influence with men — believed in a real, genuine, Scriptural, brimstone hell! Now, what do you say!

NOT POLITE TO BELIEVE IN HELL

It is not polite to believe that way, and many a little fellow has scratched that out of his creed; but he won't be in hell more than fifteen seconds before he will revise his creed, and have nothing in it but hell; he will scratch out all the rest. I am sorry for a fellow fooling away his time that way.

And I want to say to you to-night, the biggest fool this world ever saw is the man that gets in the biggest, broadest, plainest road to hell, and stops on the way trying to persuade people there is no such place as hell! The biggest fool this world ever looked on is the man that spends all his probationary existence trying to persuade himself that there is no hell, and then, after death, he lays down in hell, forever realizing that there is one.

You say, "Well, I don't like these hell-scared sinners."

Why, bless you! They are the only sort I do like. And I want to tell you to-night, fourteen years ago I got a good scare, and, blessed be God! I ain't over it good yet, and I never want to get over it until I get into the pearly gates, safe forever. And I believe in hell just as strong as I believe in heaven, and I believe that a topless heaven has its counterpart in a bottomless hell.

And just in proportion as you let up at this point, that minute you run riot in wickedness and sin and outrageous conduct; and I want to say to you all to-night, my fellow-citizens, I believe that if a man lives and dies in his sins, because that book says so, that he is lost — and lost forever! If Heaven is eternal, then Hell is eternal, for the same adjectives that apply to the one apply to the other; and this much I say, "God help me! God help me! That I may never go there."

THE LOCALITY OF HELL

A man asked me the other day where Hell was? Said I: "I don't know, and by the grace of God I never will know — I never will know."

And he asked me was there really genuine, burning brimstone there?

Said I: "I am so afraid there is, that I am never going there, and I am never going to see whether there is or not" God keep the gate of Heaven wide open before me, and some of these days I will run right into glory and to God; and then, in Heaven, shut up forever, I shall be delivered from Hell forever.

No, sir, no man here can say, "The reason I live here a sinner is because I don't know what sin will lead to." I like very well the definition of the old woman. When the old man came home he said, "Auntie, the preacher preached to-day about hellfire and brimstone," and he said, "Auntie, where does God get all the brimstone to burn forever?"

The old woman said, "Honey, all the old sinners takes the brimstone with 'em there to burn 'em forever. No, sir!"

Then I come closer to you with this question. You say you will leave here a sinner to-night — and men will do it to-night. Impenitent sinners, you will leave here that way. Well, why? It is not because you are ignorant of the nature of sin, and ignorant of its consequences. You know what sin is, and you know what sin will do for a man, and I know that sin will ruin a man in this world, and I know that sin is the same in all worlds. Men are the same in all worlds, and it is not a question how long he will endure, but how long will sin endure!

THE PLEA OF INDIFFERENCE

Then, I ask you again, is it because you are indifferent to the truth? You know what the truth is, and you know what sin will do for you, and yet you are indifferent to the truth. Oh, how many indifferent men in this world that wear a placid countenance when every nerve and muscle in them ought to be shaking under the pressure and power of truth as it is applied to them!

Oh, how many indifferent men here to-night — indifferent to the truth; indifferent to their condition — and may be in twenty-four hours from this moment they will be in eternity and their body in their coffin; and yet they are perfectly indifferent to the future — indifferent!

And I do thank God that whatever may have been my estate as a sinner, thank God, I never reached the point when I was indifferent to the truth. Sometimes I would not go to church once in six months, with the bells ringing all around me Sabbath morning, and yet I say to you to-night, I never went with my Christian wife to the house of God and heard an honest gospel sermon that it didn't move me from head to foot.

I tried to appear indifferent I would not let my wife know how I felt for all the world; I would not let the preacher know it for all the world, and yet I carried a placid, indifferent countenance through it all.

And yet that man out there says to-night: "That is my condition, I feel a good deal different from what my wife thinks anything about and what my neighbor thinks anything about; I am concerned about the great hereafter." It is not indifference.

THE PLEA OF RECKLESSNESS

Then I ask you, "Is it because you are reckless as to the consequences!" Sometimes men put on an air of recklessness and sometimes they seem to defy God and defy man. They curse with a loud voice and sin with an outstretched arm, and they think, "I have nothing to conceal; I sin publicly and openly; I defy God to his face," and there is a recklessness that is enough to make men tremble as they look upon it. Recklessness! You say, "how foolish these things."

In my own town one night, one of our citizens, a daring, reckless drinking man, stood on the platform of the depot, and he said: "To-night I am going to walk up the railroad and meet the down passenger night express, and," said he, "I am going to meet it on the track and gather the engine in my hands and hurl it into the ditch on the side of the track."

They laughed at him; felt his reckless mess had assumed a very humorous turn, and that night as the down passenger train came rolling and thundering down, just a quarter above the depot, this maddened, reckless wretch met it on the track and stooped to catch it by its defender, and it rushed and rolled on and he was ground to powder. Oh, how reckless that man was! And there is that man rushing right up into the face of God and his judgment, and by and by instead of tossing God and judgment to one side, "**upon whom this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder,**"

GREEDY FOR HELL

Recklessness! There are men in this city that are reckless in the highest degree. They are not willing to live out their three-score years and ten and lie down and die and go to perdition by the natural order of things; but instead of living out their three-score years and ten, and dying and going to Hell, twenty, thirty, forty years hence, I see these men frequenting barrooms, pouring the liquid damnation down their throats, and I see it affecting their constitutions day by day, and then I see the physician of the family tell him:

“You must hold up, sir, or you will soon be in your grave;” but instead of holding up he drinks on, and drinks on, and now we see him with liquor bringing him within six months of his grave and of Hell and of his lost estate, and he is not satisfied to drink on, and at the end of the six months he walks out on your street and picks a quarrel with a friend, and that friend shoots him down on the sidewalk, and he leaps off the sidewalk of your city down into Hell twenty years before his time — and there is a man greedy for damnation; he is in a hurry to be lost. God help that man to-night who is dangerously close to leaping recklessly into perdition and the chamber of the dead.

Whatever you do, halt to-night and say, “I will not rush on God and the grave and on eternity unprepared.”

AHEAD OF SCHEDULE TIME

There are men out here in your cemeteries to-night, if they had lived along as quiet, sober citizens, they could have been here hearing this sermon to-night; they could have enjoyed the blessed privilege of these revival meetings. There are men in your cemeteries to-night who might find Christ in these meetings and be saved forever, but they were reckless and greedy for damnation and in a hurry to be damned.

The Lord pity us to-night and check us up to-night, and if we never stop again, God bring us to a halt and bring us to our senses one more time before we die.

You say: “I am not a reckless man.”

There's many a man appears to be reckless, but when he turns off the gas at night and sits alone with God he is afraid of God, and he is afraid of the judgment, and he is afraid of eternity, and he is afraid of the great beyond. “No, sir” it is not recklessness you say.

THE PLEA OF PRESENT SATISFACTION

Then I push this question on you and ask you this: Is it because you are satisfied with your present estate, your present condition? I am so glad, brethren, that God will not suffer any man to lie down and sleep his way to Hell. No, sir! Twenty-four years the life of a sinner taught me this fact:

A poor sinner's breast is like the troubled sea?
It has no rest; it lives devoid of peace;
A thousand stings within our souls
Deprived our hearts of ease.

And I tell you to-night, I never saw a minute of my life that I was satisfied with my condition. No, sir; I was an orphan and I was friendless and hopeless amid all the gaities of life, when I looked at my condition. "No, sir," you say, "it is not because I am satisfied with my present condition."

God won't suffer a man out of harmony with him to get into an estate like that. I don't care what you say about your happiness and your peace and all that sort of thing. God bless you, brother, you know it is the truth, that the pleasures that you drown your life in are:

Like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed;
Or, like the snow-fall in the river,
A moment white, then melts forever.

Lord pity us poor fellows, feeding on the husks of swine day after day and trying to satisfy the immortal soul.

A COMPROMISE LIFE

"No, sir," you say, "it is not because I am satisfied with my present condition." Then I ask you again: "Is it because you are leading a sort of a compromise life — 'I am going to be religious after a while'!"

If I were to make this proposition this moment — if I ask every man in this house who intends to prepare for death between this and his dying moment, to rise, everyone in this house would stand up immediately. No man ever settled and fixed the question unalterably and forever, "I have made up my mind to be damned." I never saw the man that would say that. Then, brother, have you and I any more time to throw away! I have often thought of that little fellow running down to the train with all his might, and just as he reached the depot the train rolled off, and there he stood, sad and disappointed and dejected, and a kind friend looked on the little fellow and said, "My little man, I will tell you what is the matter."

"What?" said the boy.

"Oh," said the man, "you didn't run fast enough."

"Oh, yes, I did," said the boy, "I ran with all my might, but my trouble was I didn't start soon enough." And oh, me! There's many a man in this world that will miss Heaven, not because he didn't start, but because he didn't start soon enough. And I have seen the passenger stand at the depot platform and the train had gone, had gone, had gone, and I looked into his face and I saw written upon every tissue and ligament of his countenance, "Left! Left! Left!"

And when the last hope shall have swept by you and gone on without you, then upon every fiber and tissue of your soul will be written, "Left and lost! Lost and left forever."

Oh, my Lord! teach men that while God Almighty runs His trains right at our feet every day, and checks up enough for us all to get aboard, it is the bounden duty of every man to step on board and go to God and to glory.

FOLLY OF "GOING TO QUIT WRONG"

A great many people think, "Well, I'm going to quit doing wrong; I have made my mind up for that" Yea. What is that worth! Here is a man whose all depends on his reaching Cincinnati tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock. He goes down there to the depot to-night and stands there and lets the trains all pull out and leave him. You will say, "Friend, you have lost your all"

"I know that"

"Well, why didn't you get on board?"

"Well, I — I — I came down here to the train, and I — I — I thought if I wouldn't throw any rocks at the engineer, and I wouldn't cuss the conductor, the thing would take me along anyhow. I thought all that was necessary was for me not to bother the engineer and conductor."

And there's many a man in this world standing and being left forever who expects to get in at last because he didn't cuss the preacher and throw rocks at the meeting-house. There's a good deal of that sort of foolishness in this world.

A PLEA OF SPIRITUAL APATHY

Then we come at you with this question: You say, "No, sir, I will not lead a compromise life. I know I ought to be religious, but I have not set a day ahead." Then I ask you this question: "Is it because a spiritual apathy has taken possession of your soul?"

Listen, brother:

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee life."

The saddest attitude of the soul as it lies on the brink of perdition is the attitude of slumber. A man sleeping over his immortal interests! Can you imagine a man like that!

In our State we have a Mr. William A. Rogers, president of the Marietta Female College. One morning his wife was indisposed and he sent his servant to the drug store for quinine. In a few moments the servant came back. Mrs. Rogers took the powder and put it on her tongue. She rinsed it down with water, but as soon as she had swallowed it she walked to the front porch, and to her husband, who was in the flower yard, she said: "Husband, that was not quinine I took just now. I sent for quinine, but I am satisfied that was not quinine."

Mr. Rogers ran down with all his might to the drug store and said: “What was that you sent my wife?”

The druggist threw up his hands and said: “Sir, I have sent enough morphine to your house to kill a dozen persons.”

Mr. Rogers ran over to the doctor’s office and carried two physicians home with him. They administered emetics and strong coffee and various remedies, and directly a death-like stupor began to crawl over her frame. The agonized husband turned to the doctors and said: “Is there any chance to save my poor wife?”

“Yes,” they replied, “if we can keep her awake for four hours we can save her life.”

The minutes seemed like hours as they walked her up and down the floor, and threw cold water in her face and whipped her person with cruel switches, and every means was used. Directly that death-like stupor became so oppressive that she turned to her husband and said: “Husband, please, sir, let me go to sleep,” and he said, “Oh, wife, if you go to sleep you will never wake up again in this world.”

“I know that,” she said, “but please sir, let me go to sleep.”

And they walked her up and down the floor, and, directly, when the stupor overwhelmed her whole being, she turned to her husband, and said: “Husband, please, sir, let me sleep for just five minutes.” And he said: “Wife, if you go to sleep for five minutes, you will never wake up again in our house!” And thus they waited until the four hours had passed, and the doctors pronounced her safe.

THE OPIATE OF SIN

And I have seen the soul of man just in that condition. I have worked with him, prayed with him and wrestled with him day after day and week after week, and the devil would administer opiates to his soul and he would say: “Just let me sleep until this service is over — this last hour’s service of the meeting. Just let me sleep through this.”

And I have aroused him and we have sung, “Come humble sinner,” and on and on, and then he said: “Just let me sleep through this last verse.”

But if I die, that mercy fought
That on the King have cried,
Its then to die — delightful thought—
As sinner never died.

And he sang the verse through, and he closed his eye and slept and slept and slept, until in hell he opened his eyes, wide awake forever! Oh, brother, can you sleep that way? Oh, brother! Oh, how men sleep over their immortal interest! How men sleep over the interest of their souls!

I can arouse this town with the cry that there is danger to a family here. In the city of Atlanta, a few months ago, the Wilson House, one of our second-class hotels — in size, I mean — caught fire. The flames burst out of the window, and directly the fire-bells commenced ringing, the fire companies came thundering down the street, and multitudes pressed toward the hotel. The servants ran from room to room and awakened the guests. They waked up this one and he dressed hurriedly and ran out. They waked up that one and he dressed hurriedly and ran out:

COULD NOT BE ROUSED

Finally a servant went to one room in which there were two guests, each in a different bed. He aroused one. He jumped out of bed. He aroused the other, but with a moan and a groan he went to sleep again. The guest who had been aroused dressed himself hurriedly and ran to the bed of the other and shook him and said: “Get up, the house is on fire.”

He simply moaned and groaned and went back to sleep. When his friend had finished dressing he ran to the bed and pulled the man out of bed. He stood him on his feet and said: “The house is on fire! Hurry! Hurry! Or you will be burned up.”

The man as he was turned loose shot back into his bed with a moan and a groan, and went to sleep again. And the next day, when they were raking among the debris of the building, they found his bones all charred and burned. And many a time on earth, heaven seems too long to arouse us and pull us away from our surroundings and stand us on our feet and cry “Fire! Eternal fire!” and yet there we stand, and at last among sulphurous flames and eternal perdition, our bones lie burned and charred forever. Look here, friends, if we wake to-night, let us stand up like men and flee from the wrath to come.

A DEAD PEACE

You say, “No, I am not asleep. I am wide awake. I hear it! Not only do I hear with my ear, but all you say is ringing through the chambers of my soul! “Then one more question and we come to God’s answer.

Is it because a spiritual apathy has taken possession of you? Is it because a spiritual peace — a peace that defies the cannon, that walks away unmoved from God, a peace that means the certain, awful and dreadful death of the soul; a peace that a man gets at the cannon’s mouth and with the sound of musketry all around him, a conquered peace that means the apathy of the soul?

I will illustrate it.

At one of our big camp meetings in Georgia, Bishop Pierce was announced to preach at 11 o’ clock on Sunday morning — Bishop Pierce, whom we love so well, and whom we believe to this day to be the grandest preacher America has ever produced. Tented on that camping ground was a good woman, or rather, her husband tented there. She was a Christlike, good woman; her husband was a wicked, wayward sinner about sixty years old. He tented there on account of his wife, and he was kind and clever to the preachers and to all the guests at the camp meeting.

On that special occasion the old man brought his chair out and took a seat among the worshipers. And the bishop said that when he stood up and read his text something seemed to say to him, “You are preaching the last awakening sermon that that old sinner will ever hear.” He said the Spirit of God came down upon him and seemed to turn loose all the powers of his nature. He poured hot grape and canister on to the devoted head of that old sinner.

A VICTORY FOR SIN

And there he sat in his chair and turned pale and red, and at times he would turn and twist in his chair and bite his lip. He was very restless during the whole sermon, and as soon as the bishop sat down the old sinner took his chair, went to his tent, fastened the front door, barred the back door, and shut the windows and fastened them.

When his wife came to dinner with her guests she knocked for admittance. The only answer she received was an unearthly groan that was awful to listen to. She looked through a crack in the window and saw her husband prostrate in the straw on the floor.

She said: “May God Almighty secure a victory over my poor husband. The good Spirit of God has touched his heart”

She went back there at three o’clock that afternoon and the battle was still going on. She knocked for admission, but received no answer except those moans and groans. She went back at midnight and the battle was still going on.

At daylight next morning that battle was growing hotter and thicker — a battle greater in its results than Gettysburg or Waterloo or any other battle ever fought in this world — a battle between God and an immortal spirit.

At one o’clock in the afternoon, just twenty-five hours after he shut that door, he opened it again. His wife was standing on the opposite side of the tent. She saw the tent door flew open, and she ran upon the wings of the wind to embrace her converted husband; but when she went up to him the cold marble look of his countenance and the rigid frown on his face told her that he had conquered the Spirit of God. But it took him twenty-five hours to do it, and that was the last battle that poor old man ever fought. He was never disturbed any more. And I want to tell every man here that you have that same battle to fight to-night or to surrender to God.

It may not take you twenty-five hours; it may not take you twenty-five minutes. You may fight God and conquer his spirit within your heart in twenty-five seconds, and that will be the last battle you will ever fight on this side of eternity. Oh, me! This night surrender, if in your heart there has stirred the woings and warnings of God’s Holy Spirit. All sin will be forgiven you. And he that doth this shall never be forgiven in this world or the world to come.

And successively sinning against the Holy Ghost, by telling Him no when He woos you for salvation will be met finally at the last time as He leaves you to your despair.

THE ANSWER AND THE TEXT

Now, the answer comes right here. Listen, my friend. God says the reason a man will continue on in sin is this:

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

That is to say, because the sentence or punishment for evil is delayed ten or twenty years before I am damned for it, I will just sin on.

Here is the proof. Listen. If you knew that immediately the next oath crossed your lips that you would be sent into eternity, you know you would never swear again. If you knew that the next time the intoxicating cup touched your lips your sentence would be immediately pronounced, you would never drink again. The logic of sin is this: “Because God is good I will sin; because God is long-suffering I will rebel against God, and I will make God’s goodness a reason for my wickedness and God’s long-suffering an excuse for my continued crime.”

Oh Lord, have mercy on us and help us to decide it here and now. “I will never sleep another moment on earth until my past is buried in the precious promise of God. I am going to look out for my soul in the future.”

Now friends, in all love and kindness, if you would make peace with God and get to Heaven, how many of you who are not Christians to-night will say, “I don’t want to fight that fight I want to surrender to God.”

How many of you, young and old, fathers and mothers! Will stand up where you are, and say, by standing up, “I would surrender to God to-night and live and be a Christian”! Oh, if I were there in your place, I would be the first one to stand up! Let us now decide to make our peace with God, and call a halt in our course of gin. (Several persons rose to their feet).

That is right. Whoever feels like saying, “I will repent to-night,” stand up (More rising.) That is right, my brother. Do not be ashamed or afraid. Stand up in the gallery, in the dress circle or anywhere. Stand up all over, you who feel like saying, “I want to repent to-night. I would not fight God out of my heart”

A CALL FOR PENITENTS

And now I will say to the congregation we are going to have an after service, and all of you that want to retire do so. Every one of you who are not Christians who stood up stay with us and come to the front. All who did not stand up, and are not Christians, come to the front, and may God to-night give us one hundred souls for Christ.

Oh, friend, do not leave here if you are not a Christian! I trust to-night one hundred or more honest penitents will come and take their seats in front here and tell me, “I want to know God.”

A good many were converted here last night, and a good many in the church to-day. Now, my friends, let us make our peace with God, and it will be the grandest night in our history.

The regular services closed with the benediction, but the after service lasted quite a while, local ministers and other Christians going nobly to the front to talk to those who felt a desire for a better life, and had made up their minds to walk after it

~ end of chapter 13 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
