

A QUEST FOR SOULS

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Seven -

PREPARATION FOR MEETING GOD

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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

It would be very interesting if we might know the experiences that GOD's people have had to-day in this community, as here and there they have had conversations with others about personal religion. I am constrained to ask how many Christians gathered in this large assemblage to night have made it a point to speak an earnest word with somebody to-day about personal religion? Did you do your best? Were you faithful? Then you may gladly leave the result with GOD.

And now I come to ask if every Christian listening to me will not make it a point - a point of conscience - will not put it upon high principle, to speak to somebody, even to as many as you may and ought, about personal religion, before we come here to this tent again to-morrow night? Can't you give an hour to that weightiest of all matters, the effort to help others in the right care of the soul? And if it could not be an hour, couldn't it be half an hour? And if it could not be half an hour, couldn't it be half a dozen minutes? Tell me, is there any Christian here who, for any cause, should allow to-morrow to pass without speaking to some soul about being right with GOD? I beseech you, my fellow-Christians, do your best now to help those who need you in the realm of religion. the Lord be your constant inspiration and help in this heavenly work of shepherding souls!

PREPARATION FOR MEETING GOD

Text: "**Prepare to meet thy God.**" (Amos 4:12).

For quite awhile now there has been a word thrust into prominence, through the press and from the platform, all over this land and in other lands. That word is "preparedness." Its meaning is at once evident. In recent times its meaning has been associated with the realm military, and in such realm its meaning is entirely plain. The word is an equally suggestive one in the realm of education. Oh, what a summons there is to-day to the young people all over the land to get ready

for life's work - to be worthily prepared. And this word "preparedness" is an equally worthy word in the important realm of business. And certainly, in the highest realm of all, the realm of religion. this word "preparedness" has an immeasurably important meaning. Our text points the lesson for us in five little words, quite familiar, but to the last degree suggestive: "**Prepare to meet thy God.**"

I shall not now stop to discuss these five words in their setting, but shall begin my message by asking you, one by one, this all-important question: Are you prepared for your meeting with GOD? Meet Him you must. Your relations to Him are inescapable: "**We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.**" It is more serious than that: "**So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to GOD.**" Are you prepared for your inevitable meeting with GOD?

These five little words suggest for us three infinitely important questions. Let us together ask them and answer them as faithfully as we may this Thursday evening.

"**Prepare to meet thy God**" - why?

"**Prepare to meet thy God**" - how?

"**Prepare to meet thy God**" - when?

I have asked these questions as simply as it is possible for me to ask them, so that these boys and girls about me, of young and tender years, may know the points that I am seeking to enforce, for it behooves CHRIST's preacher ever so to preach, not simply that the people may understand him, but so that they must - so that as they go their ways and speak one to another about what they have heard, or ponder it in their hearts, their hearts shall say: "One thing is certain, and that is, we know what the man was driving at." God help us to-night to speak and to hear like we ought. Above all else, we now would pray for the leading of the HOLY SPIRIT throughout this responsible hour!

Let us consider the first question suggested by the text:

"**Prepare to meet thy God**" - why?

It would be enough to say that GOD commands it. Running like an unbroken thread all through His book is His command to the children of men to make preparation for their meeting with Him. We could rest our case right there. God commands it. When we know the mind of GOD about anything, it is the part of the highest wisdom for us to relate ourselves obediently to that command. This is GOD's command.

And shall the poor little creature turn in defiance away from the great and holy Creator? Shall the human, whose life is utterly contingent upon the divine will, turn away from such will and seek to ignore Him? This is GOD's command: "Oh, ye children of men, prepare ye to meet me!" And when we have His command about anything, then it is the part of the highest wisdom for us to follow that command without reserve and with all devotion.

But the reason for such preparation is revealed to us still further by the revelation GOD makes in His Book to us. Our condition demands that we shall make such preparation.

And what of our condition? There has come to us in our very natures a moral sickness, the name

of which is sin, which has turned us all away from GOD. Sin is a moral sickness in human life, as real as the hand or the eye is a part of our physical life, and because of that moral sickness, calling for a helper, and because a helper has been vouchsafed, we are to turn to that helper and seek to have healing and recovery from our moral sickness.

One little word describes it all, and that word trembled on the lips of JESUS when He was here: **"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."** Oh, what a world of meaning, of horrible meaning, is condensed into that one little word, "lost!"

And outside of CHRIST, that is the condition of mankind. If that could only be realized, how different would be our attitude towards sin and towards GOD, who would deliver us from sin's enthralling power. Oh, if that could be realized! One prayer, my fellow Christians, I adjure you to pray, as we gather here from evening to evening, and yonder at noonday in the Chamber of Commerce auditorium - one prayer: "Lord, open the eyes of men and women, that they may see, touch their hearts, that they may feel, their absolute need of GOD!"

When I was a child - with awful vividness do I remember it - there went throughout the land a shuddering story that a little boy had been kidnapped away from his parents, had been stolen away from his home, had been lost to his loved ones. Not to my dying day can I forget the thrill of horror that day by day went through my childish heart as I heard them discuss it in our home, and heard the neighbors discuss it when they would gather, that a little boy had been lost to his parents. Somebody had stolen him away, and parents were resorting to every possible means to find out about that little fellow, that he might be recovered and restored to his loved ones. When the older people in the country home where I lived would come in from the farms, they would look for the latest paper, if haply they might find some word about that lost little boy - Charlie Ross. And mothers drew their little fellows nearer to them and watched them more closely, as they pondered the direful meaning of the losing from the home of a precious child.

Oh, if that truth could only be passed on and up, like it ought to be, to the realm of religion, and we could lay to heart like we ought what it means for the soul, for the self, for the personality, for the life, to be lost in the sight of GOD! When we turn to the Scriptures, they are as clear as the light on this momentous point. I quote them now: **"God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Everyone of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."**

I quote again: **"There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."** I quote again: **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way."** I am quoting again: **"Marvel not that I said unto thee"** - moral man though Nicodemus may have been, splendid in his position, cultured in his life - **"marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again - except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD."** I am quoting again: **"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."** I am quoting again: **"There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of GOD."** I am quoting again: **"He that believeth the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son"** - he may have joined the church, he may have been baptized, he may sit with others at the Lord's Table, to partake of the emblems of JESUS' broken body and poured out blood - never mind, nevertheless, **"he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of GOD abideth on him."**

Salvation is by a person. It is not by a church. It is not by an ordinance, nor by a sacrament, nor by a creed, nor by a ceremony, nor by a form, however beautiful; nor by a man, however clever and pretentious. Salvation is by a person, and that person is none other than the Divine Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST. Whoever receives Him to be His Saviour is saved by Him, Whoever turns away from Him does not have spiritual life, but spiritual death.

Note further what is lost. What does it mean to be lost? When JESUS was here in the flesh, He asked the question, one of the most pungent that ever fell from His lips, indeed, if not the most pungent, and this was His question: "**What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?**" Whom was He talking about? He was talking about you. "**What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world**" - not simply this prosperous Tarrant county, not simply this progressive, fast-growing city of Fort Worth, not simply this imperial and powerful commonwealth, so dear to all our hearts; not simply this nation, first of all in the galaxy of nations; not simply this wide-spreading continent, with its measureless resources - "**what shall it profit a man**" - any man - "**if he shall gain the WHOLE WORLD and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**"

What did JESUS mean when He talked about losing the soul? Well, I will tell you, first of all, one thing He did not mean. He did not mean, as is sometimes falsely alleged, that the soul of the wicked at death would go down into darkness and annihilation, to be heard of no more. He did not mean that. JESUS as thoroughly taught the immortality of the soul of the wicked as He taught the immortality of the soul of the believer in CHRIST.

Immortality is never conditioned on character - never. If you shall die in your sins, going down into the grave and to eternity, without CHRIST, you shall consciously exist in the realm of waste and loss in another world forever, as really as the soul that trusts CHRIST and stakes all on Him shall go to live at His right hand, and be like Him and with Him forevermore.

That man who teaches the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked is an enemy both to GOD and to men. JESUS as distinctly teaches the conscious immortality of the soul of the wicked in another world after this, as He teaches the conscious and blissful immortality of the righteous in the heavenly land, which He has gone to prepare for His friends.

Oh, if death ends all, it is not such a serious thing to die! If death ends all, then this little life of ours is an awful bundle of contradictions. Would you say that the game is worth the candle, if we must suffer and be pained and have the soul swept with ten thousand vexations and disappointments and horrors, and then drop into the grave at the end of fifty or sixty or seventy years, or more or less, to be heard of no more forever? If that be all, is life's game worth the candle? Oh, my fellow-men, that is not all!

There is a death whose pang
Outlasts this fleeting breath.
Oh, what eternal horrors hang
Around one's second death!

One of the old Confederate soldiers told me of a young lad who went out from his community to the war of the '60's. The lad was barely grown. He would go to the war, and the mother pressed

into his hands a copy of the New Testament, as on his forehead she pressed her lips, and tears and prayers were mingled as she bade him good-bye, urging him as he went to war, to read that little book every day, and follow its precepts, and whether he should come back or fall on the field of battle, if he would follow the light of that little book, all would be well.

And the old soldier told how the lad went into the war, and went into battle after battle, never reading the little book at all. They were getting ready to go into one of the most awful battles of that fearful struggle, and the commanding officer was advising his men how to behave, and was saying: "You will play the men now. Many of you will not come back, but you will stand with your faces to duty." And this young fellow was seen with face pale like death, while some of the older men twitted him about his being afraid.

They said: "They will about get you, this time, lad, and you are afraid to die, are you? You are chicken-hearted, are you? You are afraid now, are you?" And drawing the little Testament from his pocket where he had carried it, from the inner pocket, he said: "When I went away from home, mother urged me to read this, and I meant to do it, and promised her I would, but I have never opened it. She said if I would follow its light and counsel all would be well, but I do not know what its light and counsel are, for I have not read it. Now I am going into this battle with the awful apprehension that I may not come back again. No, men, I am not specially afraid to die," but then he added, with an awful ejaculation, "My God, I am afraid of what is coming after death, for I have made no preparation for it!" Well might he fear. Well might he start back. There can be no sanity at all, there can be no reasonableness at all, in our coming to the end of the earthly life, and taking a leap into the dark all neglectful and unready and unprepared.

What did JESUS mean when He talked about the soul being lost? He meant the soul's separation from GOD - just that. Every man shall go "**to his own place**" when he leaves this world. The law of moral gravity is just as inexorable as the law of physical gravity. Every law of science and philosophy would utterly be disannulled if a man should not reap as he sowed. And if a man turns indifferently and neglectfully away from the claims and calls of GOD and goes the downward way, his portion must be of the kind of his own sowing.

JESUS taught it. You are not willing to defy Him, are you? I am not.

Where will you spend eternity? You will spend it just as is your relation to CHRIST JESUS while you are here in the flesh, on earth, in time. Surely, preparation for meeting GOD is a matter of transcendent concern. Teach us, oh, teach us, thou Friend Divine, the infinite importance of such preparation to-day!

But I pass to the second question suggested by the text:

"Prepare to meet thy God" - how?

In answer to that question, I may say that I know the day when you will be saved, if, indeed, you ever are to be saved. I know the day because GOD reveals it here in His Holy Word. Listen to Him: "In the day that thou seekest me with thy whole heart, I will be found of thee." Listen to Him again: "**Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.**" Oh, if this Thursday night the man, the woman, the child, is here who is wrong with GOD, who rises up with high hopes, saying: "This very Thursday night with my whole heart I

will seek GOD," then this Thursday night you shall meet Him and be saved.

There were two plain truths sounded out by JESUS and His apostles, the record of which is kept here for us in His Holy Word, and those two truths are set forth in the two pithy sayings: "**Repentance toward God,**" and "**Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Here we are, with our moral sickness, with our lapse and defeat and loss and moral failure.

Here we are, hostile and disobedient in the sight of GOD. Here we are, having violated GOD's law and transgressed His precepts. And He calls to us, saying: "Will you not repent of that evil way? Will you not turn from it? Will you not forsake it? Will you not renounce that evil way and leave it utterly behind? Not only will you be sorrowful for such evil course, but will you not translate that sorrow into action, and forsake the evil way and leave it behind?"

That is, by repentance, to turn to GOD. And then, will you not by faith lean wholly and only upon CHRIST, the atoning Saviour for those who have sinned in the sight of GOD? Will you not commit yourself to that divinely given Friend, who came, Himself the just, to make atonement for us, the unjust, that by His own atoning sacrifice He might make us right with GOD?

Will you not thus definitely by faith take CHRIST as your Saviour? Who ever comes, turning definitely away from the wrong course, and he may make such turning in one moment - and turning with absolute surrender to JESUS, the Divine Saviour - whoever comes like that to CHRIST, shall in that selfsame hour be forgiven and saved.

Oh, that it might be to-night, for every soul here present who is wrong with GOD! You set your heart to seek other things, and properly so. You set your heart to seek success in business, and properly so. You set your heart to mount the rung of the ladder of achievement, and properly so. You set your heart to reach a certain goal out there, noble and worthy, and properly so. Oh, I summon you; set your heart, by high resolve, that the greatest matter of all shall not be ignored and passed by and forfeited by you! Set your heart to seek GOD before it is too late.

But we have another question suggested by this simple text:

"Prepare to meet thy God" - when?

I have asked you two questions: Why prepare to meet thy God? And then, next: How prepare to meet Him? And now I am coming with this third question: "**Prepare to meet thy God**" - when? Oh, solemn truth, there are limits that you must not pass, for if you pass them you do it to your own deadly and eternal undoing.

"**Prepare to meet thy God**" - when? There are limits beyond which if you go, the battle for the soul is lost forever. The Bible is clear at that point. The Bible is all along reminding us of the eternal value of this probationary period called time, in the which period the highest things of the soul are to be seen to and to be determined upon forevermore.

Oh, the tragedy of being lost just by waiting too long to make proper preparation for meeting God!

Were you ever yonder above Niagara? If you have been, some hundreds of yards above that

roaring, plunging Niagara, you have seen a strange sign, flung out on either side of the river, as the river rushes to take that last awful plunge. You recall it as I speak of it. A plank with three ominous words is flung out on either side of the river, and you are arrested as your eye sees those words - just three: "PAST REDEMPTION POINT."

The meaning of the words is ominous and evident. Oh, boatman, plying your little boat on the surface of that river, do not get below that sign! Oh, canoe man, floating idly and leisurely on the bosom of that river, do not get below that sign! For a little below the sign the river-bed falls, and the river rushes with the speed almost - of the arrow let fly from the bow to take its fearful plunge over the awful precipice. Do not get below that sign.

Some where in the journeying of a human soul there is that awful sign flung out: "Past Redemption Point." Soul, do not get below that sign! Do not get into that current below that sign!

When ought you to prepare to meet GOD? What does your best judgment say about it? When ought you to make this preparation for meeting with GOD? What does He, who was and is the incarnation of infinite wisdom, say to us in response to that question, when ought this preparation for meeting GOD to be made?

He has just one message in answer to that question:

"Boast not thy self of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Since I came to this platform this evening, one passed up to me a tragic note saying: "Have a prayer for stricken parents, whose son was torn into shreds by a passing train, on the outskirts of this city, a few minutes ago."

We breathe our most earnest prayer up into the ears of our gracious Lord, that He will comfort and heal the parental hearts torn by such a sorrow. The tragedy itself points simply the truth that I am now emphasizing that in the unexpected hour, the blow falls; in the unexpected hour, the end comes. Therefore, God tells us:

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

When ought this preparation to be made? I come to affirm, on the authority of GOD's teaching, confirmed by all human experience, that to-day and now, every man and woman and boy and girl under the sound of my voice, who is wrong with GOD ought to see about preparation for meeting GOD to-day and now. And why so? Let me give you two or three reasons. Judge ye yourselves whether these reasons are worthy the consideration of your best judgment.

You should make your preparations for meeting GOD to-day and now because you need that your life here and now should be saved.

Did you think that I would say, in order that you might be prepared to die? I will say that, but not yet, for that does not come yet. That does not come first. Oh, men and women, there is not a human being before me or anywhere else competent to live life like it ought to be lived for one

short second, if such being is in hostile array against GOD. You are not ready for any duty or any day or any experience, to meet it like you ought, if you are in wrong relations to GOD, if you are not positioned openly and honestly as the friend of GOD. So I am coming to say that you should prepare to meet GOD now, in order that your life, your busy, responsible life, here and now may be saved - your life saved.

If I knew that twenty-five years from this Thursday night, I would come back to this growing city, and be right on this same spot, and under a tent like unto this, and this vast concourse of people would be back, and nobody would be missing, and we would all have our wits about us and be in our right minds on that far-off night, twenty-five years from to-night; if I knew that on that night, far-off, when I made the call for you to decide for JESUS and surrender to Him, everyone of you would come then and surrender to CHRIST and be saved, yet would I pour out my heart to you this Thursday night, and say, come now, that these twenty-five years may not be lost!

Come now, that these twenty-five years may not be given to Satan. Come now, that your influence may not be positioned against Heaven and CHRIST and all that is dearest and highest and best. Come now, that your life may be saved to the right side. Come now, that your influence may be positioned where it ought to be.

You can no more be separated from your influence over others than you can separate yourself from your shadow as you walk in the glowing sun. Come now, that your influence may be saved! Oh, what do some men and women mean, whose influence is all against Heaven and GOD and the highest life? What do they mean?

Years ago, a man was converted under my ministry in my city, after he had reached the age of some sixty-eight years, and then for the year or two afterward that he was spared, his devotion to JESUS was something to the last degree inspiring. Some months after his conversion, I noticed him at a morning service, profoundly agitated, and when I dismissed the people he tarried at his pew, and continued to sob like a heart-broken child, and I went around quietly to him, when the people had gone, and asked him to explain his strange and seemingly uncontrollable emotion, and he said: "Why, man, it was your sermon, your sermon!" And then I remembered my text:

"None of us liveth to himself." No man can live to himself. We are taking people up or down with us everyday. We are making it easier or harder for people to get to Heaven every day we live. "It was your sermon, sir," he said, and then he said: "I am the sad proof of the tragedy of a wasted influence. I came at sixty-eight to CHRIST, and as I came to this church house this morning, I came by the home of my three sons, and I begged each one of these sons to come to church with me, and they all shrugged their shoulders and faintly assayed to smile, and said: 'We guess, father, that we will start to going to church when we get to be about sixty-eight.'

"Then I tried their sons, some of them coming into young manhood, my dear grandchildren, and they looked at one another with a wink, and said: 'Grandpa, we guess we will start to going to church when we are about sixty-eight or seventy.'"

The old man said: "I came on without child or grandchild. I am myself, sir, the awful proof of the tragedy of a wasted influence." Then he rose up and looked at me with a pathos I can never

forget, and stretched out his strong arm and said: "I would have that arm severed from my shoulder if I could turn time backward and live my life over again - if I could undo my wasted influence."

And then, with a sob never to be forgotten, he said: "Sir, I would be willing to have my head severed from my body, if I could go back and teach my little boys by example how a Christian father ought to live." Oh, the tragedy of wasted influence!

A little boy slept with his father after the mother had died, and one night the little fellow awakened his father by his pitiful sobbing - this little six-year-old son - and the father said: "Why, my boy, why do you sob?" And the little fellow did not wish to tell him, but the father urged him to tell him, and presently the little fellow said: "It was a bad dream, papa." And then the father said: "Tell me what it was." And the little boy said: "I would rather not, papa. It is about you." The father, of course, was curious now, and said: "Tell me, my boy, what it was."

The little fellow said: "It is about what you have done to me. I do not think I can tell you." Then the father coaxed him and mothered him, and said: "Tell papa about it." And the little fellow said: "Papa, I dreamed that you, my own papa, had your hand to my throat, and were choking me to death."

GOD pity us, that is not a dream! I know parents who are doing that with the souls of their children. Sometimes it is a strong father, and he would lay down his life for the welfare of his child, and yet he has the grip of his parent's influence around the throat of that child's soul, and the child is missing the upward way.

Sometimes it is a mother. Oh, GOD, and can it be? The highest dignity allowed to a human being is the dignity of motherhood, and can it be that a mother, on whose heart GOD lays a precious child for the mother to love and to guide - can it be that the mother goes her way, forgetful of the highest, and in those plastic days influences her children so that they go the downward road rather than the upward? I am pleading to you to-night for your life. You will not face life like you ought to face it; you will spoil it, you will mar it, you will debauch it, you will prostitute it, you will defile it, if you dare to go your way without GOD.

Now I am going to say that second word. You should make your preparation for meeting GOD now in order that you may be ready for life's end, when such end shall come. And when shall that end come? No angel above us knows when that end shall come. It may come before midnight to-night. It may come before the Lord's day shall dawn. It may come with the gladsome ringing of the Christmas bells at the next holiday time.

When shall I take that journey down into the valley of the shadow? Only GOD knows. Not all of us will be here when the chimes of the Christmastide shall sound so sweetly in expectant ears. I am coming to say, my fellow-men, that there is no wisdom in our going our way to that inevitable end, and then taking a leap into the dark without preparedness, without readiness. There is no wisdom in that. Be ready for the time of your departure from earth. Be ready.

Give heed, I pray you, to this other word: Every day you delay making your return to GOD, by that much do you add to your difficulty about ever coming.

Therefore, should our interest be keyed to the highest for the young people.

Oh, how I covet these boys and girls in their teens, and just beginning their teens! How I covet everyone of them for GOD! Wisdom has fled from GOD's people if they do not put forth their best efforts to save the people while they are young. It is GOD's time.

Listen to Him: "**Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.**" The voice of GOD's Book, confirmed by all experience, is that in the morning of life, this biggest question of all - right adjustment to GOD - should have proper settlement - in the morning of life. Remember it, my fellow-men; remember it, my young people - every day that you delay your coming to GOD do you add to your difficulties about ever coming at all.

Every day that you delay, you increase and strengthen your difficulties. If a man will not do a thing for awhile, then by a law psychological, and physiological as well, after awhile he cannot do it.

If through some freakish fancy I should have this arm tied to my body for a dozen years, refusing to use it, and at the end of those years I should say: "Cut the cord and watch me lift the ax and bring down the trees in the forest, as I used to do when a boy," it would be found that I could not lift the ax at all. I would be helpless and impotent to lift that ax at all. I would not lift it - I refused to use it, now I cannot.

If through some fancy I should have my eyes bandaged and keep them in the dark for a dozen years, and then say to my friends: "Remove the bandages now, and watch me read as once I read from the book or the paper," you might give me the book or the paper, but I could not read at all. So long was I determinedly and positively in the darkness that light fled away.

Every day that a human soul trifles with GOD's light and turns the back on God, does such soul add to its danger and difficulty and make its probability of salvation less and less and less.

In my city, years ago, as I rode to a funeral with one of our well-known citizens, not a Christian, a man for whose salvation I had yearned, GOD knows, with a yearning inexpressible, he said to me, as we came back from the funeral, for he was quite reminiscent - we had buried his dear friend - he said: "A strange thing has happened to me, and I do not know how to explain it."

Then he added: "When you came to Dallas years ago, I heard you often on Sunday morning, and many a time I went away so stirred that I did not enjoy a mouthful of my midday meal Sunday. But I went my way, saying: 'This matter of religion will get my attention by and by, but I am preoccupied; I am too busy now.' And I have heard you on and on, but less and less, as the years passed. I heard your words awhile ago," he said, "as you stood by the bier of my dear friend, and there was no emotion at all, that I could find in my heart. I have reached a strange place, find that place is that I have no feeling at all, none at all. I do not know what has happened."

I did not tell him what had happened to him, and yet I think I know. The Scriptures are clear as the light that a human soul can trifle with light, and can resist GOD, and can refuse, and can protest, and can defer, and can wait, until after awhile the human conscience is seared as with a

hot iron, and no more is there feeling for such duty neglecting and light-forgetting soul - no more.

There comes in a solemn song that our parents used to sing, when some of us were little tots about their knees. Maybe I can quote that solemn song. Oh, the depth of its meaning!

"There is a time. I know not when.
A place, I know not where.
Which marks the destiny of men,
To glory or despair.

There is a line by us unseen,
Which crosses every path.
The hidden boundary between
GOD's patience and GOD's wrath.

To cross that limit is to die,
To die as if by stealth.
It may not pale the beaming eye,
Nor quench the glowing health.

The conscience may be still at ease,
The spirits light and gay.
That which is pleasing still may please,
And care be thrust away.

But on that forehead GOD hath set
Indelibly a mark
By man unseen, for man as yet
Is blind and in the dark.

And still that doomed man's path below
May bloom like Eden bloomed.
He did not, does not, will not, know,
Nor feel that he is doomed.

He feels, he says, that all is well,
His every fear is calmed.
He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,
Not only doomed, but damned.

Oh, where is that mysterious bourn,
By which each path is crossed,
Beyond which GOD himself hath sworn,
That he who goes is lost?

How long may men go on in sin?
How long will GOD forbear?

Where does hope end, and where begin,
The confines of despair?

One answer from those skies is sent:
"Ye who from GOD depart,
While it is called, To-day, repent,
And harden not your heart."

My message is done.

I have a question to ask you before I go.

How many of you men and women have made preparation for meeting GOD? And by that I mean simply this, that turning away from yourself you have turned to CHRIST, and are trusting in Him only and utterly as your Saviour. How many of this large throng of people can personally say: "Sir, I have made that preparation. I have heard CHRIST's call. I have yielded myself to Him. I am trusting alone in Him as my Saviour." Every man and woman and child in this press of people that can say: "I have made that preparation, sir, already," lift high your hand just now.

[A sea of hands went up.]

Oh, isn't it a sight to move our hearts! It looked to me as if almost every hand was lifted. Blessed be GOD! And yet I must ask another question. Are there men and women in this gathering to-night who could not in conscience lift their hands, thus witnessing that they are on CHRIST's side? Are there men and women listening to me who say: "Oh, sir, I am wrong with GOD and know it. I could not lift my hand. I am wrong with GOD and know it."

In the church maybe, or out - a professor of religion once, or maybe never such - but your heart says this: "I am wrong with GOD and know it. I could not lift my hand a minute ago, but I would lift it on this, that I am wrong with GOD and know it, and I wish to be right with GOD, in His own time and way."

We will offer our most fervent prayer for you in a moment, ere we go. Do you say: "I lift my hand on that. I am wrong with GOD and know it, and I wish to be right with Him, and I wish you and all these who pray to offer a prayer for me that I may be right with GOD, in His own time and way. I would lift my hand on that."

As I look this audience over for a minute, do you lift your hand? There where I am pointing, I see you, my brother, and you, dear lady. As I am pointing there to the left, does the hand lift, saying: "That includes me?" Where I am looking yonder, does the hand lift, saying: "That includes me?" I see you, sir. Oh, sirs, breathe a prayer to GOD to bless these men and women. I see you, lady, and still another, and still another over there. Back to the rear, does the hand lift there, clear to my right? I see you, gentlemen, numbers of your hands.

Oh, that to-night you would end your delay! Listen to JESUS: "**Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.**" Listen again: "**Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.**" And again: "**To-day, if ye hear His voice, harden not your**

heart."

THE CLOSING PRAYER

Take the service, we pray thee, our Heavenly Father, into thine own gracious keeping, and turn it even as thou wilt. Oh, we cry unto thee, our Father, in the dear Saviour's name, in behalf of these interested men and women and children. who this night have said to us: "We are consciously wrong with GOD, but wish to be right." How we covet them and long for them, that without delay they shall just surrender, simply and honestly, to CHRIST, that He may be their Saviour and Master. Teach them by thy Spirit that waiting has in it nothing but peril.

Teach them that by every worthy motive that can move serious people to a great step, now, without delay, they should decide for CHRIST. May thy Word be bound upon their hearts, where thou sayest: "**Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out** and where thou sayest: "**Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,**" and where thou sayest: "**Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in him, and He shall bring it to pass.**"

Oh, may these men and women and children, wrong with GOD, but wishing to be right, know, because GOD shall teach them, that It is CHRIST's business to save, but it is theirs to surrender to Him, entirely to Him, that He may save in His own way, May they make that surrender even this very night, before they sleep.

And if in this throng there were others, who did not witness to their interest about being saved, and yet who are interested, we pray, all their interest may be deepened, until speedily they shall find CHRIST. And If in this place there is one whose heart is not touched with any sense of interest touching personal religion, oh, may the Divine Spirit take of the things of CHRIST and convict such soul of the supreme and urgent need of CHRIST's forgiving grace.

Take the whole audience now into Thine own gracious care, and lead us as Thou wilt. How we bless Thee that such a vast number of the people present are able to make the great confession that CHRIST is their Saviour even now. May each one go who loves CHRIST and speak the word to whom and as CHRIST would have the word spoken, that others may be helped by us in the hours and days just before us, and helped in the highest and best way. Take this family, stricken with sorrow this very evening, and bind up their hearts with GOD's own healing comfort and grace.

And now as you go, may the blessed HOLY SPIRIT brood over you all, and may the love of the Father and the grace of the Lord JESUS CHRIST be granted you all and each, to abide with you forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 7 ~
