

The Gospel of Salvation

Evangelistic Addresses

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Five -

THE INEVITABLE MEETING

"Prepare to meet thy GOD." (Amos 4:12).

THE JEWS have a legend - I have heard my people tell it many times. It seems that a rather wealthy, moral, aristocratic Jew died and faced GOD at the judgment. The books were opened. His sins were read out, big and little, many and old. When GOD got ready to pronounce the soul's doom, the man interposed an objection. "Lord," cried he, "I did not know that I had not long to live, I did not know I was going to die. You did not warn me. It is unfair to make me stand before You like this, unprepared without some sort of warning."

The Lord looked the man fully in the face. "Your argument, your excuse, your alibi, would be quite good if it were true," He said. "May I point out to you the inconsistency of it. Do you remember when your father died, while you were but still a child?"

"Yes, Lord," the man answered.

"That was My first warning. Now, do you recall when you were twenty years of age and almost died from a siege of sickness that was beyond the wisdom and ability of the doctors?"

"Yes, Lord."

"That was My second warning. Do you remember when you followed your child to its last resting place in the cemetery, and how heartbroken you were over it? You remember how it brought you to the reading of My Word, and for a little time to attendance upon My services?"

"Yes, Lord."

"That was My third warning. And that is not all. Again and again, in various and sundry ways, I pressed upon your heart and mind the thought that you were not upon earth forever - that some day you, too, would have to die and face Me."

The moral of the story is self-evident, and it is the point of this message. Whatever else the HOLY SPIRIT may be able to use in this humble sermon, it is my fervent prayer that He may take these five tremendous words, **"Prepare to meet thy God,"** and etch them on your souls

with burning fire. May He give you no peace or rest until you shall have realized your need of preparedness and complied with GOD's Word for the forgiveness of your sins and the regeneration of your souls.

The Bible gives fair warning. Proverbs 1:22-33:

"How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

Language can be no simpler, words can be no clearer, appeal can be no more definite.

The meeting with GOD is inevitable for every soul in all the universe. The time of the meeting is entirely uncertain. There is no way of telling when the last minute of probation is finished, when the last chance for preparation vanishes. Because all men are sinful, all men must make some preparation for this meeting. It is the need and the manner of this preparation that I seek to impress upon your hearts.

May we, therefore, humbly and prayerfully consider this timely, tremendous, terrible text, from these three angles: first, a warning; second, an instruction; third, an appeal.

Surely this text contains a warning. We all know that life is short and indefinite, that death is certain, that judgment is coming, that eternity is long. Yet there are many who go on heedlessly, hoping against hope, trusting against the revealed wrath of GOD, insensitive, indifferent, indolent, undecided. Many such may be reading these words. GOD direct this warning to you.

Some of you do not believe that you need preparation. Humanly, earthly speaking, you are clean, moral, refined, cultured. You are good fathers, good mothers, good husbands, good wives, good sons, good daughters, good friends, good neighbors. Your pictures are not in a rogues' gallery. The police are not on your trail. Your creditors are not knocking at your door. You belong to social, civic, fraternal organizations. You believe that the Gospel is for bums, for vile sinners, for outlaws, for outcasts, and for those badly bespattered with the muck and mire of life. You go on your way thinking that because by comparison with others your life is rather bright and clean, you need no preparation for the judgment and eternity. But you are wrong.

The Word of GOD is authoritative. Your experience backs the declarations: **"There is not a just man upon the earth... that sinneth not."** **"There is none righteous, no, not one."** **"There is no**

difference, for all have sinned." All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Your record also bears the blots, the blemishes, the blightings of sin. You have not loved GOD with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind. You have not lived up to every word of His revealed will. Your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. Measuring yourself by the standard of CHRIST, you are as filthy rags in the sight of GOD. You need changing. You need cleansing. You need converting. The dross must be purified out of your lives. The stain must be removed from your record. The hoof-prints of Satan must be banished from your character. You, too, must prepare to meet your GOD.

There are others of you who know that you are sinners, who know that CHRIST died for you, who know that you need preparation, but who are yet putting it off to some future date. The light GOD has given you, the feelings He has stirred in your hearts, the emotions He has raised in your souls, will witness against you on the day of reckoning. You know what you should do; you know what you need to do; you know what you must do. Yet you trifle, you hesitate, you delay, you hold off the HOLY SPIRIT, claiming a thousand and one excuses that would hold no water in an ordinary business transaction, let alone in the terrible exigencies of this vital matter.

What do you hope to gain by delay? Will GOD be more ready to save you tomorrow than He is today? Will you have less sins tomorrow than you have today? Will CHRIST's blood be more effective tomorrow than it is today? You would not so put off the purchasing of a home, the changing of a job, or any other matter of daily occurrence, yet you place your souls in the balance between Heaven and hell, as you listen to Satan saying, "Not today." Were you to die in your condition, you know full well that your good intentions would not be respected at the bar of GOD; that your oft made and as oft broken resolutions would be of no avail to you at that awful tribunal. Oh, brother; oh, sister, be done with your ungrateful, insensible hesitation. GOD speaks to you in this hour. **Prepare to meet thy God.**

There are others to the ends of the earth who need this preparation, to whom this warning is directed, who are depending upon other methods besides those of the Gospel, on useless, valueless preparation. Some are trusting in the fact that they were born and reared in a Christian home, that they were sprinkled into the fellowship of some Christian communion while they were yet babes in arms. Some are counting on church membership, water baptism, the taking of the communion, regularity in attendance upon the house of GOD, giving of their means, or on other outward forms of Christian ceremonialism, observances, and duties. None of these will do. They are not considered in the scheme of GOD's redemptive program. They are no part of the process and power of salvation. They will not stand the testing fires of the judgment. They will not float the soul over Jordan's stormy waters, nor bridge it over the chasm of the lake of fire and brimstone. To you, too, the HOLY SPIRIT directs this warning. To you, too, GOD cries, **"Prepare to meet thy God."**

No matter what class you belong to, the Lord has made three appointments with you. The first one is at Calvary, at the cross of the Lord, JESUS CHRIST, for it is written: **"for GOD hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."** The second is in the hour of death, for it is written: **"It is appointed unto men once to die."** The third is in the day of Judgment, for it is written: **"The times of this ignorance GOD winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day, in which he**

will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."

We may refuse or fail to meet GOD at Calvary, but death and the Judgment are unavoidable. The value of your souls, the reasonings of your minds, the feelings of your hearts, should constrain everyone of you to heed and hear this mighty warning, "**Prepare to meet thy God,**" and to heed it now. When death comes, when the judgment day dawns, it will be too late to talk of preparation. There is no second chance in the grave, there is no probation period in eternity. Purgatory is an idle dream. It is now or never. Death is either GOD's inviting messenger or GOD's arresting officer. If you hesitate, you delay, you neglect, you refuse, you die in your sins. You've had your chance. You meet GOD at the Judgment. What then?

This is not only a warning - that would not be enough. It would leave you frightened, uncertain, hesitant, not knowing which way to turn. GOD comes to us, therefore, with an instruction, a direction. *We must prepare a character* that will stand the scrutiny of GOD's holiness. It must be scriptural in its foundation, and spiritual in its force. It must be based and built on compliance with GOD's will. CHRIST must be its pattern, and the HOLY SPIRIT its tutor. It will not be enough for it to pass the standards of men; it must measure up to the rule of GOD. We will not be judged by what finite men think of us, but by what the Infinite GOD knows of us. Some one well said that "character is what we are in the dark." There is no "dark" for GOD. Consequently, we may directly say that "character is what we look like to GOD." That is a fearful thought, that there is some one who knows the very most inner recesses of our being, to whom our goings out and comings in, our days and nights, our thoughts and words, our deeds and hopes, are as the pages of an open book.

We must prepare a record. The Bible is specific in its implication that some day at the great white throne the books will be opened and men will be judged "**out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.**" Surely, this record cannot be glossed over, cannot be minimized, cannot be destroyed. It is kept in the Archives of Glory. There is only one element in all creation which can have any effect upon it, and that is the blood of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Unless the blood of the Son of GOD cleanses you from all sin, this record will spell your doom in the counsels of eternity.

We must prepare an advocate, one who will speak for us, one who will plead in our behalf. There is only one accredited counsel in the court of Heaven, even the man CHRIST JESUS, for it is written, "**We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**" He alone can stand by our sides, can lift his voice on our behalf, can, through His own blood-bought merits, claim the mercy of GOD. Oh, souls, what will you do if you do not prepare an advocate? What will you do if you have this JESUS, not as your defender, but as your prosecutor?

Scripture tells you how you may prepare, what steps you must take to make yourselves acceptable in the sight of GOD. May I impress them upon your hearts in this hour of need. First, you must be reconciled to GOD. By nature, by choice, by practice, you are dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the **course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath... without Christ, being**

aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

This enmity must be abolished. This barrier must be smashed through. This chasm must be bridged. In CHRIST, GOD offers you ample and abundant provision for your reconciliation, for it is written in Colossians 1:19-22:

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."

Again, it is written in II Corinthians 5:17-21:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

These are the words you must heed. These are the steps you must take. This provision is for you to receive. This bounty is for you to enjoy.

Second, you must be born again, converted, regenerated, changed, made over. GOD's requirements in this direction are familiar to all of you. JESUS said: **"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."** And again: **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."** And again: **"Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven."** But this new birth, this conversion, this regeneration, is totally impossible without the intervention of GOD. You may be ever so brilliant, ever so cultured, ever so talented; but in this you are totally and entirely dependent upon the mercy, the grace of Him who loved you and gave His Son for your sins. Thank GOD, therefore, that I am able to say to you, upon the authority of GOD's holy Book, that regeneration may be your eternal possession if you will but turn to CHRIST. Thus it is written: John 3:14-15: **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

Titus 3:3-7:

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. Not by works of

righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

You need not become a slave of Satan. By faith in CHRIST you may be made a child of GOD.

To be reconciled to GOD, to be born again, you must repent and put your faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST. These are the unchangeable conditions for both reconciliation and regeneration. GOD will have no mercy, no pity, no pardon for any of you unless you show yourselves sorry for your sins, unless you unhesitatingly show your willingness to give them up, to turn your backs upon them. For did not the Lord JESUS CHRIST say, "**Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish**"? Repentance was the message of John the Baptist, who cried, "**Repent ye for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**" When JESUS sent out His disciples to evangelize the lost world, He told them that "**repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.**"

Faith in CHRIST is another essential. As a matter of fact, repentance and faith are so closely united that it is almost, if not, altogether, impossible to separate them. Repentance will lead to faith, and faith will lead to repentance. Repentance and faith together will bring us to the feet of CHRIST, will apply His shed blood to our souls, will bring us into a divine union with Him forever.

All these things are contained in the warning and the direction of our text: "**Prepare to meet thy God.**" We must prepare a character, a record, an Advocate. We must travel the way of repentance and faith towards reconciliation and regeneration. Now, the question is, what will you do with this instruction from the heart and Word of GOD?

Consider, therefore, this "**Prepare to meet thy God,**" last of all as an appeal. In a hundred and one ways in the pages of the Bible and in His impressions upon our lives, the Lord appeals to us to walk in His way, to do His will, to abide by His word. The hands of GOD are tied. He may either pardon you in CHRIST, if and when you accept Him as your SAVIOUR, or He must punish you in hell. If you turn a deaf ear to His entreaties, you have left Him no recourse but to let dread punishment take its course. Be warned now! Be guided now! Be entreated now!

There are just two classes of people in this world, the wicked and the righteous.

There are just two ways to travel, the way that leads to Heaven and the road that leads to hell.

There are just two places at the judgment bar of GOD - with the children of GOD, the washed in the blood, the sheep, on the right hand of the Redeemer, or with the unbelieving, the sinful, the goats, on the left hand.

There are just two places beyond the grave in eternity, the mansions in glory, with all their bliss, and joy and song, or the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, with all of its torment, its remorse, its hopelessness.

The choice is all entirely yours. GOD wants you with the righteous, on the road to Heaven, at the right hand of His Son, in the home of peace; but you must prepare to meet your GOD.

The provision for this preparation in the person, the passion, resurrection, the power of JESUS CHRIST, is ample, abundant, sufficiently effective, universally available. *If you perish, it will not be because you need to, or because GOD wants you to, but because of your own hard-heartedness.* Surely it is not your intention to go on as you are, forever braving the wrath of GOD, the curse of the law, the wages of sin. Surely, it is your purpose, ere it is too late, to make this preparation so absolutely essential.

I beg you, therefore, to prepare now. GOD pleads with you. The Bible appeals to you. Christians weep over you. The angels of Heaven are bending low to help you. Now is the time to prepare. Now is GOD's time! Now is your time! Now is the best time! Now is the only time!

Put your watch to your ear. Every ticking sound of it says - "Now!"

Put your finger upon your pulse. Every beat of it says - "Now!"

Put your hand upon your heart. Every pulsating throb of it says - "Now!"

What shall I do with you? How shall I plead with you? What shall I press upon you? Will you follow me to the deathbed of your loved ones? See their paling cheeks, their filmed-o'er eyes, their stiffened limbs; hear their gasping breath. Every heart-rending scene, every bitter sound of that last agony says - "Now!"

Walk with me through the sacred, silent confines of the cemetery, the city of the dead. Every heaped-up grave, every tombstone, every cross, every blade of grass, every wilting flower, every sorrowing memory says "Now!"

Stand with me on the brink of hell. Look down into the pit of torrent! See the writhing anguish of the doomed and damned! Hear their fearful cries! Were they able to speak to you tonight, with all the vast anguish of their souls, they would cry out - "Now! Prepare now! Get right now! Flee to CHRIST now!"

Look up into the marvelous magnificence of Heaven. Hear yon singing, shouting, rejoicing, saintly band. Hear them, as with outstretched hands and pleading voice, they urge - "Now!"

If you would escape the torments of hell, if you would hope for the bliss of Heaven, if you would rejoice in the presence of GOD, inhabit that land without sorrow, sickness, or death - prepare now!

The way is wide open, as wide open as the arms of JESUS, spread-eagled on Calvary's cross. There is nothing to stop you. There is no one to stop you. The heart of GOD cries - "Now!" Come now! The blood of CHRIST says - "Now!" Come now! The Word of the SPIRIT urges - "Now! " Come now! Deep down in your own being the still small voice of conscience, GOD's monitor, says - "Now!" Come now!

In all this vast universe there is but one dissenting voice, but one gainsaying note, and that is the voice, the lie, of Satan. In all this created world there is not another soul but that urges you to a right decision now. Surely, in this moment, realizing, hearing, heeding the warning, the direction, the appeal of GOD, you will prepare to meet your GOD. Do it for JESUS' sake. Heaven, earth, hell, angels, men, demons, life, death, eternity, are breathlessly awaiting your decision. This hour is momentous. With all the passion of His boundless love, with all the anxiety of this limitless concern, pointing to the CHRIST, the cross, the blood of Calvary, the HOLY SPIRIT entreats you, "**Prepare to meet thy God.**"

~ end of chapter 5 ~
