

GOSPEL SERMONS

as

Sam P. Jones

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SERMON TWELVE

PREPARE FOR THE LIFE TO COME

We invite your attention to the twelfth verse of the ninth chapter of the prophecy by Zachariah:

“Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you.”

The all-absorbing theme with God and angels and good men is the salvation of the living. Not the salvation of men who lived fifty years ago, or a hundred years ago. They have had their opportunities and enjoyed their privileges, and they have met their destiny. Not the salvation of men who shall live a hundred years hence; they have yet to be born, and yet to enjoy their privileges and opportunities. But the absorbing theme of God, and angels, and good men, is the salvation of men and women who live and walk and talk upon the face of the earth to-night. And isn't it passing strange that this great question should so engage the heart and mind of God, and of angels, and of good men, and yet, perhaps you, and you, and you, should be the only creatures in all God's vast universe that seem to be totally disinterested in this great question? And now, we purpose to-night, not to draw upon our imagination or try in the least to impose upon your credulity, but we stand squarely on the book, and we will talk about what we know.

A COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Somehow or other I love frequently to talk over things with the friends that I know, and when we begin to talk about “I knows” and the “you knows” and the “he knows” and the “she knows,” then we begin to get very close to one another. There are some things that we all know in common. I know that I am twenty-four hours nearer the cemetery than when I assembled with you in this house last night. You know you have one day less to live than you had this morning when the sun arose upon this world. You know that these moments bear our life away, and are carrying us into the great beyond. You know that in your youthful days your heart was softer, your conscience was more tender, and your will was more easily affected by truth, and by grace, than it is to-night. You know that you are not such a husband as you ought to be. You know you do not set such an example to your children as you ought to. You know your life and character to-night are not what they ought to be before God and man. I say that when we begin to talk about these things that we know, we are getting very close together, and there are some things that we know from the teachings of that book. And now we come squarely to the text:

“Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.”

We stop at this point to say that there are three classes of prisoners with hope, and there are three classes of prisoners without hope. Now let us find our latitude and longitude in spiritual things. Let us find where we are on this occasion. It is the privilege of every man to know his bearings to-night, to know just where he is and to know whither he is tending.

FALLEN ANGELS WITHOUT HOPE

The first class of prisoners without hope that the book speaks of are the angels who kept not their first estate, but sinned against God and were driven away and put in chains of everlasting darkness, to await the final judgment day. While you and I have had a chance of life, and while peace and pardon is for the fallen man, those angels who kept not their first estate are in that lone land of deep despair, without a ray of heavenly light or a spark of hope, forever and forever. As I look upon an immortal spirit whose chains confine it to hopeless and everlasting despair, my heart shudders as I look upon the picture. But I never saw an angel. I have never been brought into sympathy with angels by association. I know very little of them. Angels have not flesh and blood. They are not subjected to wrinkles and gray hairs and old age and death, like you and I, and perhaps they are separated from our sympathy.

But this book speaks of another class of prisoners without hope. That is that man and that woman who have walked the streets of the city of St. Louis, enjoyed just such privileges as you and I enjoy, and then die without God and without hope in the world. There may be some gospel truth in that old couplet:

“While the lamp holds out to burn.
The vilest sinner may return.

But when fate snuffs the candle and it goes out in death, then all hope is gone forever. I ask you, mother, did you ever pray for your boy since he breathed his last breath? Wife, have you ever offered prayer for your husband since he bade you good-bye in death? Sister, have you wrestled with God at the mercy seat for the salvation of your brother since he passed out of the world? No, sir, the common convictions of humanity are all together on this proposition that as the tree falleth, so it shall be forever, and that, instead of there being anything in death to reverse and to sanctify and to save, that death is the opening of the door and the passing out of the soul into eternity:

WHERE PREACHING IS IN VAIN

I have preached the gospel in more than twenty States, perhaps, of this Union. I may preach the gospel in every State of this grand old Union. If God were to call me to China I would go to China and preach the gospel as willingly and as cheerfully as I bade wife and children good-bye to come to your city. But there's one place I never have preached the gospel, and there's one place I never shall preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that is out here in the cemetery. I shall never stand among the tombstones of earth and beg the bones of the cemetery to come to Christ.

No, sir! Never!

- What you and I do with this question we must do between this and the gate of the cemetery.
- What you and I do upon this question, we must do before the doctor lays his hand upon our pulse for the last time, and bids our weeping wife or loved ones to prepare for the worst — that death shall come in an hour.
- What you and I do upon this question must be done before that clock on the mantel-piece seems to click louder than ever before.
- What you and I do must be done before wife or loved ones shall bathe their handkerchiefs in their tears and weep over us as we pass out of time into eternity.

If that book teaches anything clearly, it teaches there is no knowledge or device or repentance in the grave, whither we are all tending, and I tell you, my brother, that whatever we may be in this life, or what preparations we may make and what character we form in this life, shall settle destiny for us when life shall bid us walk out of the body and go into the great beyond.

And this man and this woman, who have lived and died in our midst, enjoyed the same privileges, enjoyed the same opportunities that you and I enjoy, and yet, in spite of all overtures of grace and the wagon-loads of sermons that have been wasted upon them, in spite of all, have come to death's hour without preparation, and passed into eternity to be judged by the God of all the earth! Oh,

Death rides on every passing breeze,
And lurks in every flower;
Each season hath its own disease,
Its peril every hour.

NO TIME TO SELL

And perhaps 1,000 of this congregation at this moment, if you were to die in your pew before I am through preaching, would be prisoners without hope, forever.

Your heart in your bosom is a muffled drum beating your funeral march to the tomb. And every step you and I take from this hour to our dying couch, shall be toward the cemetery, and yet we rush right upon the gates of the cemetery unprepared for death and unprepared for eternity.

I see men whiling away and throwing away hours of their life. Many and many in this city will be like the millionaire of London who gave his life to making money, and when stricken suddenly with meningitis, his doctor hurried to him and said to him, "You have meningitis and you'll be dead in two hours." And the wealthy, worldly man looked him in the face and said:

"Doctor, if you'll keep me alive till to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock, I'll give you £100,000. I'll give it to you cheerfully."

The doctor looked at him and said: "I have prescriptions to give and I have remedies for disease, but, my friend, I have no time to sell. Time belongs to God."

Oh, poor, wayward, worldly man, that whiled away all the precious hours of life, and now, forsooth, when death meets him, tells his physician, "I will give you half a million dollars if you will keep me alive for sixteen hours." Oh, poor humanity, throwing away hours and privileges that are worth all the world!

PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS

A prisoner without hope.

Oh, sir, if there is a fact in my history for which I am thankful and will praise God in Heaven forever; it is the fact that God did not let me die in my sins. It is the fact that in and through the abounding mercy and grace of God, I was brought to see myself and repent of my sins and make peace with God before I went hence and was no more among men.

"A prisoner without hope."

Oh, me! Have you ever shaken hands with a man who this moment is a prisoner without hope forever? I stood under the tent at St. Joseph, and said on one occasion, "I am preaching now the funeral sermon of some soul in this congregation. I feel it in my blood and bones that some man is rejecting his last chance to make peace with God."

And in less than ten days from that hour a young man who sat in that congregation and heard the words of my lips, staggered and fell, in a drunken spree, and dropped dead on the streets of St. Joe!

Oh God! Help that man who is to pass out of time first! God help him to be prepared! And just as certain as we are gathered in this hall to-night, God has thrown this revival meeting in your pathway and has thrown all this between you and that estate where you will be a prisoner without hope forever.

A SAD STORY

I have often thought of the experience and incident of a young man, vigorous and healthy and strong, raised by pious parents, and on his dying couch he sent for his pastor.

The pastor was a personal friend of his, and when he walked into the room and saw his sunken condition; the poor boy looked up in the preacher's face and said: "I have sent for you, but not to pray for me. I have given all my life to sin and worldliness, and I have not courage now to turn over the poor dying man to God," and, said he, "I have not sent for you to pray, but I have sent for you that I might give you a message to my friends at my funeral service, and," said he, "I want you to tell my friends at my funeral that I am dying a lost man, and lost forever. But tell them that if any man had slapped me on the shoulder ten years ago and said: 'Tom, ten years from to-day you will be dying without religion,' I would have told him: 'No, sir. I had a good mother. I have a respect for religion, and I intend to give my heart to God.'

"And," said he, "if any man had slapped me on the shoulder twelve months ago and said: 'Tom, twelve months from to-day you will be dying without religion,' I would have looked the man in the face and said: 'You don't know me; I will never die without religion; my purposes are fixed to seek and obtain religion before I die.'

"Said he: "If a man had ten days ago said to me: 'Tom, ten days from now you will be dying without religion,' I would have said: 'No, sir, you don't know me;' and, said he — 'and I want you to listen to this, the saddest thing a dying man ever said —

"At last, at last, after all my mother's prayers and all my good resolutions and all the means that have been brought to bear upon me, at last, at last, I am dying without religion."

And that is the saddest thing mortal man ever said upon his dying couch. And if you die to-night, the world would sit around your corpse to-morrow and say: "At last! At last! After all his resolutions and all his purposes, he died without Jesus Christ."

THE WILLFULLY WICKED

But there is another class of prisoners without hope.

Thank God we are not among fallen angels. I thank God, we not among the dead! There is another class of prisoners without hope, and that is the men and women of this city that are just as certain to be damned as they walk the streets of this city to-day. There are men in this city who have not heard a sermon for twenty years; there are men in this city who have settled it "I never intend to hear another;" there are men in this city who have fenced, effectually fenced, their souls off from good, and thrown around them bulwarks and doors that the grace and spirit of God can never penetrate in this world.

And when I walk out on the streets of our town and find a man as he walks the street that has settled it — "I never intend to repent," I would as soon shake hands with a dead man as to shake hands with him. He is dead to all that could lift his soul to God; dead to all that could make him good and happy; dead to all that could save him in time, and dead to all that could save him in eternity.

I beg you, my friend, to-night, to stop a moment and consider. Have you crossed the line? Have you crossed the line from beyond which no soul ever returned!

"Here is a time, I know not when,
A place I know not where,
The spirit will poise his golden wings
And leave me in despair.

THE DIVINE DEAD LINE

There is a line by which all our paths are crossed, beyond which God himself has sworn that he who goes is lost.

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20).

And in my short life as a preacher, I want to tell you to-night I have seen men reject and reject and reject the mercies of God until I have almost heard the gates of mercy close in their face forever.

“A prisoner without hope.”

Just at certain as he breathes he is a doomed man. He never will repent. The chances are all against us. The chances are all against us, now may be. Brother, will your heart ever be as tender as it has been in the past? Will you ever be worked up under gospel truth as you have been in the past? And if after all your tender years are gone and all the influences of your youthful days fail to reach you, are not the probabilities to-night that you never will repent, that you will die like you are, **“a prisoner without hope”**! Ah, me! - the poet said:

The wretch condemned with life to part
Still, still on hope relies,
And every pang that rends the heart
Bids expectation rise.

But, oh, sir! When hope dies out and endless despair takes possession of the soul — oh — sir, then I ask you, what is there but the cry: “Oh, miserable me! Which way shall I fly?”

Infinite wrath! Infinite despair!
Which way I fly is hell;
Myself am hell!

Oh, sir, the soul that is impenitent gravitates to its home, and its home can be nowhere else except in the perdition of the damned.

“A prisoner without hope.”

I wonder if there is a man here listening to me to-night that you could not move him with the gospel and the thunders of all the worlds; if there are men here to-night who are not just as disinterested in what I say as if they had no soul to save, and there was no immortal interest at stake.

My brother, let others do just as they please, and let others throw away their time and their souls, but let's you and I make our peace with God and our calling and election sure, so that when we fail on earth we may secure a mansion in the skies.

THE PRISONER WITH HOPE

But, I thank God, there is a different side to this question, and let us consider it but a moment.

There are three classes of prisoners with hope. The first class we mentioned are the faithful men and women of the Church of God, striving, struggling, day after day, to keep the commandments of God, and love and serve Him with all their hearts. Oh, thank God, there are many of this class in the city of St. Louis. They are prisoners, but, thank God, prisoners of hope — prisoners of hope. Every good man that walks the face of the earth is a prisoner of hope, and:

Oh, what a blessed day is ours,
While here on earth we stay;
We more than taste the heavenly joys,
And antedate that day.

My mother was once a prisoner of hope, but when death ate the ligaments that bound her to earth, she went home to God, and for thirty years she has been walking the golden streets, one of God's freemen, forever. My precious father was a prisoner but, thank God, a prisoner of hope!

And when at last he, upon his dying couch, pushed the doctors back from his bed, he overleaped the circle of loved ones about his dying couch, and above star and moon he went until he over vaulted the very throne of God itself, and to-night he walks the golden streets, a child of God and a freeman forever. Thank God these chains will not last always.

Thank God these temptations are not forever. Thank God these environments will not last further than the grave! Bless the Lord, O, my soul! There is a world Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

We, I say, are bent upon that gracious home up beyond the skies.

HEAVENLY CONSOLATION

I never see a wife grow pale and suffer that I don't bless my God there is a country where no wife shall ever pale, and where no sickness shall ever come. I never see my precious children suffer and swing like the pendulum of the clock between life and death that I don't thank God there is a country where health blossoms forever upon the cheek and the light of life shall ever sparkle from the eyes of our children. Oh, thank God, there is a world of freedom!

And these faithful Christians are on their way to the world where freedom shall be enjoyed in its most blessed and it's most glorious sense.

Brother, you are a prisoner of hope, and as long as that star of hope shines over my pathway here is one man that is ready to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ.

As long as that star of hope shines over my pathway I am ready unto every good word and work. As long as that star shines over my pathway, like Paul I will throw aside everything and count it nothing, and neither will I count my life dear unto myself, but that I may run with patience the race to that city of God where sickness and sorrow and pain and death are felt and feared no more.

Oh, brother, if you mean that a man shall do his duty, shall preach the gospel, all right, I will preach. If it is to pray, I will pray; if it is to lead the devotions of my home, I will do that; if it is to divide my last cent with God and the poor, I will do that; if it is anything, if it is everything, I will give up all things that I may have all things in the sweet by and by, “**A prisoner of hope.**”

Blessed be God! There is an assurance in every man's heart that inspires him by day and by night, “**A prisoner of hope.**”

Paul said: “**That blessed hope!**” “**That blessed hope!**”

A HOPEFUL CLASS

Well, thank God, there is another class of prisoners with hope. That man out there that does not belong to any church, but he stood up here yesterday afternoon and said, "I run the white flag up; I surrender to God; I want to be a Christian.”

Brother, hear me to-night: God loves the meanest man in St. Louis, just like God loves the best man in St. Louis. Brother yonder is a father that loves a son with all his heart, and that son is headed to a drunkard's grave. Does that father's love save, that boy from the drunkard's grave? There is a mother with all her affections wrapped around her boy, and yet he drinks, and drinks, and drinks, until at last he leaps out from the presence of his mother into a drunkard's eternity, and that mother will go to his grave twice a week and carry flowers and plant them on the mound above him, and bathe the dust that covers his body in her precious tears; but did that mother's love save that boy from the drunkard's grave? Neither can God's love save his son — you and I — unless we bring ourselves in the comports of grace and let Him save us.

THE MILITARY CALLED OUT

At this point Mr. Small advanced to the front of the stage and handed Brother Jones a paper, which the latter read, as follows:

A number of the members of my command are in your audience to-night. You will please kindly announce to them that they are wanted at the armory at once for active service. (Signed) E. D. Meier

Mr. Jones — if you are here just retire quietly and we'll proceed with the services.

After the commotion caused by the military-men getting up and leaving the hall had somewhat subsided. Brother Jones said:

Now, let us give special attention, for I will tell you, when your doctor says to you that you are wanted in eternity, that will be a greater, grander announcement than this. Let us be perfectly quiet, for I assure you we have no interest, perhaps, in that announcement.

Some one suggested that the call was for the purpose of participating in the obsequies of the late Vice President Hendricks, when Brother Jones proceeded, and said:

That is for Hendricks, the Vice President I suppose that is what the announcement is for — to gather the artillery for, perhaps, to go to Indianapolis to-night. I hope we'll all be quiet. My! My! If that sort of an announcement stirs you that way, I wonder how you'll feel when death shall strike you and you have got to go into eternity!

A NOBLE SURRENDER

“A prisoner of hope.”

That man who has in his heart the burning desire to be a Christian is a prisoner of hope, and I tell you, my brother, the man who says to-night: “I surrender to God; I give my life to him; I seek the cross;” that man is a prisoner of hope; and you will never be damned if you will follow the inspiration and the desire. “God help me to be a faithful Christian.”

Oh, brother, there are many men in this house to-night who have the burning desire in their heart to be a good man — and some to be a good woman. Well let me tell you that every one of you with such a desire in your heart, every one of you, if you foster that desire and follow the purpose out, God will meet you with peace and pardon, and you by and by shall be a freeman forever.

Friend, let's you and I look after our hearts to-night. Is there down in our souls an intense, burning desire to be a Christian? If there is, let us surrender to that desire to-night and say: “I will make my peace with God.”

And then, there is another class of prisoners with hope and that is, those men and women who have not made up their minds at all, but they are thinking on this question.

Oh, brother, there is a chance there that you may be saved, and I wish every poor man here to-night with the desire in his heart to be a Christian, I wish you would, like Garfield — President Garfield — when they probed his wounds he looked at the doctors and he said: “Doctors, is there any chance for my life?”

The doctors answered back: “Yes, there is a chance,” and Mr. Garfield said: “Well, I will take that chance;” and he did, and wrestled and grappled with death for three long months as no hero in America, perhaps, ever did; and if that man and that woman will take the chance — a chance that you have to-night — and grapple with it with all your ransomed powers as grandly and nobly as Garfield did with life, then I say to you it will issue into a bright, happy, joyous experience here, and Heaven in the end. Listen!

A DIVINE PROMISE OF REWARD

“Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Even to-day I declare I will render double unto thee.”

Now a word on this part. Hear me!

“I will render double unto thee.”

A great many people think, “Well, after all, I am not ready yet to seek religion. If I were to seek religion now, I would have to give up everything, and just live a poor, sad, groping pauper the balance of my life.” Well, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. Listen:

“Even to-day do I declare I will render double unto thee.”

“Double.” I never read that passage that I do not think of the incident a church brother told me once. He said there was a young man in a revival meeting he was carrying on who was seeking religion earnestly for two or three days. One day he walked out of the church after the young man and said to him, “You are in earnest; you are in earnest. I cannot see why you are not blessed and saved.”

“Oh,” said the young man, “I think I know the trouble. Every time I go to the altar and seek God on my knees, this fact comes up before my eyes. I clerk in a grocery store that retails liquor by the quart and pint, but not by the drink, and every time I kneel down and pray, the fact that I am clerking and selling liquor by the quart and pint comes up before me and stops my prayers.”

“Well,” said the preacher, “I would give up my clerkship.”

“If I do,” replied the young man, “It looks as if my mother and sisters will starve. My mother is a widow, and my sisters are orphans; and every bite they eat comes from what I earn. I would surrender it in a moment if it was not for that.”

“Well,” said the preacher, trust God and do the thing you ought to do, my brother.”

He told me the young man went on down to the store and told his employer: “Sir, I have been seeking religion earnestly, and I cannot be pardoned; I cannot pray as long as I clerk for you and sell whisky in this house.”

Do you hear this? A man cannot get religion and sell whisky at the same time. That is as true as God made this world. And then I will tell you another thing. A man cannot keep it (religion) and sell it (whisky). A man cannot keep it and drink it: Listen to me a minute.

FOR CATHOLICS

I saw in a paper the other day, I saw in a paper in this city the other day, a boast that this was a Catholic city and not a Protestant city. I deny it. With all my heart, I deny it. A Catholic city! You may know, and I know a man is a Catholic by his cross. What is the cross an emblem of? It is a symbol of purity, holiness, and righteousness. And you tell me that the cross of Jesus Christ is the foundation stone of all the devilment and whisky drinking and corruption of this city. It is a lie as black as hell, I do not care who said it.

The grand old Catholic Church will never father the corruption and guilt there is in this city.

When I see the sisters of charity going forth on their errands of mercy and goodness, and when I look to the noble priests and the popes and bishops of the Catholic Church who teach us the purest morals and would lead us closest with Christ, I will not let any man say this is a Catholic city. It is a lie. I wish the city were that or something else that would make the people quit their meanness. I do.

And if the Catholic Church will take St. Louis and redeem her from her barrooms and her lewd houses, and her Sabbath-breaking and her corruption, I will put on my hat and turn the city over to the Catholic Church and say: "In Christ's name bring her to Christ." I am not here to fight the Catholic Church. God bless the Catholic Church and help her to be pure and holy every day and everywhere! God bless the Catholic Church just in proportion as she is pure and holy and good; as she represents the emblem of the cross she bears. And to the proportion as she is walking in the light of the Jesus Christ of the Bible and the Blood of His sacrifice on Calvary that brings eternal life to whomsoever will come.

AN IDEA FROM CHICAGO

I want to read this article. I want you to learn it:

Chicago, November 8th.— The Chicago Reformed Alliance are about to take measures to have the saloons closed on Sundays. The city government will not be asked to take any action in this movement; the method proposed being to prosecute all offenders against the State law known as the Dram Shop Act, which prohibits the opening of saloons on Sunday, under a penalty of \$200 for the first and second offense, and a term in the penitentiary for the third. A number of prominent lawyers have volunteered their services for the prosecution of offenders.

Among a number of saloons visited yesterday by the committee but one was found closed, and to-day indictments will be found against a few of the offenders. One of the members of the committee said there would be no trouble with the first-class saloons.

Hear that Well, I reckon hell itself is graded somehow. "The first-class saloons!"

One of the members of the committee stated that there would be no trouble with first-class saloons, as the owners seemed perfectly willing to close up on Sunday.

Brother, let me say to you this: Old Missouri on her statute book has promulgated a law that forbids the sale of liquor on Sunday; and I want to tell you that the question, "How men sworn to execute the law can let this city be debauched with Sunday saloons," is a question deeper than I have the power to probe into. If you will elect me governor of this State — and you could not run after me fast enough to give it to me, I have something better than that — but if I were elected governor of this State, I would not sleep three hours a night until I saw that the laws of my State were enforced. Thank God, Georgia has a governor who is one of the most pious men in our State. He loves Jesus Christ. He is an earnest deacon in the Baptist Church. The chief justice of our Supreme Court will pray all night around the altar with a penitent. Our judges and men in authority love God and are moral men.

A REFLECTION ON MISSOURI'S GOVERNOR

How can you reform any State in God Almighty's world with an old swill-tub for a governor and two or three old mash-tubs for Supreme Court judges?

A man who is privately corrupt can never be politically pure, and the first thing we did when we wanted to reform Georgia was to put God-fearing and good men in authority and, by the grace of God, we have the best State in the United States of America. You run a freight train through Georgia on Sunday, and the conductor and the brakemen and the whole crew employed on the train will sleep in jail that night. And you open a bar-room in our State on Sunday and you will sleep in jail that night. We have a God and a Sunday in Georgia, and they are as precious to us as our wives and our children.

“Even to-day do I declare I will render double unto thee.”

Now, there is no malice aforethought in what I have just said on this tangent, but I say this about selling whisky: No man can be a Christian and sell whisky. I hope to God Almighty the grand old Catholic Church will turn every barrel and every demijohn out of the whole concern. I hope the grand old Methodist and Presbyterian and Baptist Churches will touch not and taste not and handle not the men who sell it or the men who drink it:

A TEMPERANCE STORY

That boy of whom I was speaking told his employers, “I cannot stay any longer with you.” They said, “Well, we are sorry to give you up. You have been a good boy since you have been with us.” And they paid him off. They were paying him \$50 a month. That boy went back to the services and surrendered his heart to God. And he went home and lifted up his heart to God. The next morning, just after breakfast, he received a note from his old employer. He went down to their store, and they said, “Walk into the liquor-room that was.”

He walked in and he saw that every barrel had been rolled out; and they said to him, “We have closed out that part of the business, and if you will come back and clerk for us again we will give you \$100 a month.”

“Even to-day do I declare I will render double unto thee.”

No man ever lost anything by surrendering a wrong and giving his life to God. No, sir. Well, some man in the house may say, “I do not believe your anecdote.” But I can tell you one a heap bigger than that. Fourteen years ago — my brethren of the ministry, hear me — fourteen years ago I gave my life and heart and all to God and entered into his service, and I read in that book — and I thought it was a big statement:

“If you will forsake houses and lands and all to follow me, I will give you one-hundred fold more in this life and everlasting life in the world to come.”

Well, I took God at his word. When I started out to follow God, I left our little home in Cartersville, but, blessed be God, he has given me a hundred homes wherever I have gone — just as good as home could be. And I left one mother — a gracious stepmother she was to me — I left her to follow Christ, and, bless his holy name, he has given me a thousand mothers wherever I have gone, who have been as good to me as my own precious mother. I left a few friends in my own home to follow Christ, but, blessed be God, he has given me a thousand friends for everyone I have left. And, blessed be God, I have now one thousand fold more in this life and the bright hope of everlasting life in the world to come. God help every man here to-night to say, I will turn to the stronghold! I will be a Christian! I will give myself to God!

AN APPEAL TO THE PROFESSORS

Now, as we are going to dismiss this service in a moment brethren, I wish to say I have been here a week, preaching, praying, doing the best in my poor, humble way, with a thousand faults and a thousand mistakes. I know it! Know it! Know it! I need sympathy and the mercy of God for myself.

But, brethren, will you be honest with God? Will every member of every church who sits before me to-night — and only members of some church — how many of you will stand up with me and say: “God helping me, I intend to be loyal to my vows; I intend to help to win the world to Christ by a faithful, earnest life and make my way to Heaven; I am going to work out, under this star of hope, my salvation, with fear and trembling”!

Brethren, I say not now what your past life has been. But listen a moment I want to talk for myself a moment. Brethren, whatever may have been my past, I feel like standing up and saying with you: “Oh, God! If I have never done it before, right here and now I give myself to thee from head to foot, through and through, soul and body for time and eternity.”

How many of you brethren in Christ, of all churches, will stand up with me a minute and say:

“That is my honest conviction; I give myself wholly to God”!

Now everyone that feels that way, stand up (The great majority of the people in the hall rose).

THE PENITENTS

Well, thank God. What a host. Brethren, let us keep our vows and do our duty. Now, please be seated a moment. I am going to ask every man — you see what we have done — I am going to ask that every man not a member of any church, not a professor of religion, will stand up. Oh fathers, we cannot afford to be wicked and wayward. Boys with good mothers, boys with good fathers, you cannot afford to be wicked and wayward. Brethren, how many of you not members of any church will stand up and say honestly, “I want to be a Christian; I want to be a good man; I want to seek God; I want the prayers of all this people”!

Now, my friend, will you be honest with your soul and with yourself?

I trust every man not a Christian will stand up in his place for a moment and say — and having said it, stand by it forever — “I want to be a Christian. I want to do right; I want to find my way to Heaven,” How many in this house, in the gallery or anywhere, will stand up and say: “It is true from the depths of my heart I want to be a Christian”!

Now, let everyone not a member of a church, stand up. Will you stand? (Some fifty persons rose). That is right. Thank God! Thank God! Everywhere over the house! Stand up and stand a moment. That is right. Thank God! Thank God! Now in a moment we are going to pronounce the benediction, and will every person here — you who stood up and you who did not stand up — if you are not a Christian, when the congregation passes out stay here about five minutes, and let us talk over this eternal question? Oh, this is business for eternity!

Won't you stay with us a few minutes? Gather here in front after the congregation passes out, and let you and I talk a little on this question to-night. These preachers will help you. If you have your wife along she will come with you. If you have friends along, your friends will come with you. Let every soul not a Christian come to the front after the congregation passes out. Pray God to-night that you may all profess the precious hope that you may be saved for time and eternity. Blessed God, abide with us now and forever. Amen.

Seventy-five persons stayed to prayers, and of these, twenty-five made profession of Christ as their hope for the life to come.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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