

## A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers  
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### TWENTY-TWO

#### NOON SERVICE, JUNE 23, 1917

##### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

For just a moment, I would follow up the announcement made concerning the men's meeting in this auditorium at 3:30 o'clock, Sunday afternoon.

Concerning it, I would make these two or three suggestions: Let every Christian man take this occasion to speak to his neighbor and friend and acquaintance, wherever he is in the community, and ask such man to come with him to the services.

Oh, how the world waits for personal attention. There can be no substitutes for personal attention. The world is dying from the lack of that personal touch. These Christian men will bethink themselves, and call to mind now and through the day, certain men throughout the city who, they have reason to think, are not Christians, because they are not aligned publicly with GOD's people. These all should be approached in the right way. Not one should be passed by. You think about them now. There are men in the stores, in the banks, in the shops, in the mills, and in the factories, everywhere. Take this occasion to help them.

My fellow-men, if the religion of JESUS CHRIST be worth a button, it is worth dying for, and surely it is worth living for. You will now see about helping your brother men to the last limit of your power. And then these women, who will not meet with us in that afternoon meeting for men, will singly, or in little groups, I trust, see how by prayer they can help the meeting. Is there any other way whereby we may more powerfully help the world than by prayer? What a suggestive expression that is in the Bible: "**Ye also helping together by prayer!**" What a marvelous force is prayer! - Now; these women can help in that way, yonder in their homes, and all of us can help as we get ready for such service.

Very deeply has my heart been touched from day to day, in these brief noonday services, that large throngs of men and women have been minded to come at such hour, for such services. And

as I have seen you come in, and have searched your faces, and have read therein the lines of burden and struggle and questioning and wistful yearning, as best I could, I have cast myself upon GOD, and besought Him to help me to help you. That longing is in my heart this Saturday noon, as you come to this last mid-day service.

Life is so stressful, so crowded with work and battle and burden that we need all along to fortify ourselves with the promises from GOD's Book. One does not even know how to pray like he ought, if he cannot take these promises, and fill his mouth with them, and plead them before GOD, saying, as did one of old: "**Do as thou hast said.**"

These promises are designed to inspire us, and rest us, and fortify us. We do not make enough of these promises from GOD's Book. They fit every condition in human life. If we will only find it, there is no condition that is not met by a promise out of GOD's Book, and these promises give us a grip on spiritual realities. I summon you to-day, my busy men and women, to search out these promises from GOD's Book constantly, and appropriate them, and make them your own, and plead them before Him. One promise from GOD's Book has, times without count, anchored a human soul and kept it going in the right way.

### **A PROMISE FOR EVERY DAY**

Text: "**As thy days, so shall thy strength be.**" - Deuteronomy 33: 25.

I wonder if there is any other promise in the Bible that has more frequently proved itself a balm to men and women than this promise that now I read to you, as the text for to-day: "**As thy days, so shall thy strength be.**"

This morning, for a little while, let us ponder that promise. How heartening it is, in view of our weakness! Over against our weakness, there in that promise - is the promise of strength. "**As thy days, so shall thy strength be.**" How heartening that promise is, in the face of our weakness! And our weakness will be discovered to us, in anyone of many directions that we may take. Take our own duty, whatever it is - and who has not cried out time and again, as he faced his duty and grappled with it - be he preacher, or parent, or professional man, or other toiler, whoever he is - who has not cried out, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things? How can I get through this task?"

Now, over against our sense of weakness and weariness and faintness, here is this promise of strength.

This promise comes to hearten us as we look at the progress that we are making in the better life. Whenever we turn the glasses within, and search ourselves thoroughly, how pained we always are at the meager progress that we are making in the better life.

We look around us, and see certain personalities who are growing and expanding and triumphing in a remarkable way in the Christian life, as it seems to us, and then we look at ourselves and behold how little the progress, how meager the growth, how few the attainments that we have made and are making in the Christian life.

But especially does this promise come to hearten us and re-enforce us, when we look at our besetting sin or sins in life's daily battle. Every man has his besetment, and every woman hers. The Bible speaks of the sin which "**doth so easily beset us.**" Everyone has his besetment, to enslave him, to handicap him, to hinder him.

Now, a promise like this is of great worth to us, as we grapple with our besetment, whatever it is. With one person it is one thing, and with another it is another thing, but everyone has his besetment, everyone his handicap, his weakness, and we need strength to set over against it, and here it is promised us in this heartening promise.

One man's besetment is the tendency all along in human life to be discouraged: Oh, what a pitiful thing in human life to feel keenly the pressure and the weight of depressing discouragement. Every man should set himself against it, and every man should be an encourager. A discourager hurts human life. Every man is to be an encourager, positive and constructive in his daily battle and message.

And then here is another, whose culpable weakness, it may be is envy. Oh, what a terrible besetment that is! The Bible asks the question: "**Who can stand before envy?**" It is as rottenness in one's bones. Envy is incipient murder. Envy eats up every noble thing. If a man finds envy anywhere in his life, he should pluck it out and fling it away, as he would fling away the deadly cobra, seeking to coil about his heart.

Another man's handicap is the temptation to uncharitableness. What a serious handicap that is! In His fundamentally revolutionary Sermon on the Mount, JESUS uses the searching words: "**Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.**" And then He asks a biting question: "**Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye**" - a mote is a tiny splinter - "Why beholdest thou the tiny little splinter in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam" - that is, the big log - "considerest not the big log that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite," said JESUS, "**first cast out the beam**" - the big log - "**out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote**" - the splinter - "**out of thy brother's eye.**" Oh, if you have the tendency to harshness, to censoriousness, to uncharitableness, put it utterly away, it is so disastrous in its blinding and blighting effect on life!

But does some one say: "No, that is not my trouble?" Does he or she say: "My trouble is the trouble of anxiety" - eating, consuming, apprehensive, corroding anxiety?"

I suppose that comes to us all more or less - the trouble of anxiety. So JESUS speaks in His Sermon on the Mount: "**Be not anxious about what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or what you shall wear.**" Be not anxious! JESUS there teaches us to put anxiety away, and He gives us the reasons why we should put it away, why we should refuse to be enslaved and dispirited by corroding, consuming anxiety.

He tells us, in the first place, that anxiety is utterly needless. "**Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?**" Anxiety won't help us at all, says JESUS. And He goes on and tells us that He cares for us, and therefore we are to refuse to be swept with anxiety. "**If He clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He**

**not much more clothe you, Oh, ye of little faith?"** If He feeds the birds, if He paints the lilies, will He not care for you? And so He bids us, by His own Fatherly care, not to let anxiety eat like a destroying microbe into our life.

And then He goes on to tell us that such anxiety is heathenish. "**After all these things**" - something to eat, and something to wear, the temporalities - "**after all these things**," says JESUS, "**do the Gentiles seek**," and you are to do better than they. And then He goes on to tell us that anxiety only adds to what is coming to-morrow. "**Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.**" For all these reasons He bids us to put anxiety utterly out of our lives.

Well did the immortal B. H. Carroll, our incomparable Texas preacher, say that there are two things that nobody should worry about.

First, he said we should not worry about what we can help. Let us help it, if it can be helped.

And next, we should not worry about what we cannot help. If we cannot help it, worry will not improve it at all.

Those two things, what we can help and what we cannot help, cover the whole case. Now, if we can help it, let us help it, and if we cannot help it, let us cast it all on GOD, and say: "Lord, lead thou me on, and I will follow where thou ledest," and leave it just there.

Let me ask you to look a little more closely at this gracious promise, with which I would fain fortify your heart and mine this day.

"**As thy days, so shall be thy strength.**" Whose is the promise? It is the promise, in essence, which GOD makes to His friends, times without number, here in this Holy Book, by direct statement, and by implication. That is the unending promise of GOD all through His Book. Now, since that is GOD's promise, His pledge, that pledge is well-grounded. There are promises human. They are often frail; they often come short; they often break. But this is GOD's promise, and when we know it is GOD's promise we can rest upon it with all the tranquility and peace with which a child lies back upon its mother's heart: Yes, it is GOD's promise.

He comes to us, saying: "You cling to me, and follow as I point the way, and your strength shall be meted out to you. Whatever your doubt or duty or difficulty, whatever your sin or sorrow or suffering, so shall be your strength, if you will only cling to me."

But I beg you to notice that there is a limitation in that promise.

Many of GOD's promises have limitations, and all this is to be looked at carefully. This promise here has a limitation. Notice it: "**As thy days, so shall be thy strength.**" "**As thy days**" - you see the limitation. "**As thy days, so shall be thy strength.**"

Nowhere does GOD say: "As thy desires," because many a time our desires are improper. Many a time our desires are selfish. Many a time, if our desires were granted us, we would be far worse off. There is such a thing as withheld answers to prayers, just because GOD loves us too much to send an answer to some prayers we offer.

If your little child comes into the room in the morning, before the tasks of the day begin, perhaps as the Father is at the mirror shaving, and the little thing reaches up and clutches for the razor, and insists that the Father shall give it the razor, the Father holds it back and will not let the child have that deadly thing in its little hands. The Father knows that the child will harm itself with that instrument, and he loves the child too well to grant the child its desire. And many a time you and I cry in our hearts for something which we so much wish, and GOD sometimes withholds the answer, for if we got the thing that we pant for and yearn for, it would be a razor with which we would cut ourselves, and so GOD knows best.

That is a remarkable picture at Paul, with his thorn in the flesh. No one knows what Paul's thorn in the flesh was, but it was something very serious. Paul was not a cry-baby.

If ever there was a manly preacher, who left his impress in the sands of earth, it was the Apostle Paul! Sincere was he as the sunlight; genuine to the very depths of his heart, as every man of GOD ought ever to be. The fundamental virtue in life is truth and integrity and sincerity. If a man be not sincere, his life is a ghastly lie. This man Paul was the incarnation of sincerity and integrity and truth. But he said: "**There was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, sent to buffet me.**"

He said: "I imitated my Lord in the garden, who poured out His prayer to His Father three times. So did I pour out my prayer," said Paul, "beseeching the Lord thrice that He would take that thorn out of my flesh." And the Lord answered him: "I will do nothing of the sort, Paul. I am going to leave that thorn right there in your life." Mark you, it was a "**messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him.**" Oh, how it goaded him, and harassed him, and tortured him, and burned him! but GOD left it there, even though Paul prayed three times that GOD would take it away. And wouldn't you have rejoiced to have heard Paul pray?

Evidently Paul was at his best when he was on his knees. wouldn't you have been glad to have heard Paul pray that prayer to GOD three times: "Take this thorn away?" GOD did not take it away, but He gave His gracious re-enforcement: "**Paul, my grace is sufficient for Thee.**" And after that, Paul went his way singing: "**Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmity, for when I am weak, then I am strong!**"

"The power of CHRIST," said Paul, "rests upon me because of this thorn, as I never would have had it if the thorn had not come."

Now, doesn't that explain very much? GOD comes with His fortifying power to help his child, whatever the need, whatever the day.

Let us took into this promise a moment further: "**As thy days, so shall be thy strength.**" It does not say: "As thy fears."

Wasn't it Spurgeon who said that everybody has a trouble factory at his house, and if the trouble does not come along easily and quickly, we put the factory to work to see that it comes? Oh, what fearful folk we are! Everywhere GOD's message to us is: "**Fear not.**"

One of the most wonderful things said by JESUS is in the last book of the Holy Bible. It is His ringing word: "**Fear not.**" "Fear not to live," said JESUS, "**for I am alive.**"

"Fear not to die," said JESUS, "for I died. I have explored every chamber of the grave, and you need not be afraid."

"And then you need not be afraid of what is coming after death," said JESUS, "for I hold in my hands the keys of death and of the invisible world."

"**Fear not,**" JESUS said, "because I am alive, you need not to be afraid to live, whatever comes to you. And you need not be afraid to die, no matter where nor when. And you need not be afraid of what is coming after death, for I have the keys of death and the invisible world in my hands. You trust me and be without fear." That is His wonderful word. Let us hide it in our every heart.

In a certain pastorate, there was one woman who had a good deal of property - only one. The rest were very poor.

This woman was far along in years, indeed, around seventy, I should say, and all her children were married and gone; and yet every time the young pastor went to see her, how fearful she was lest her bank stock should somehow be lost, lest her property somehow should take wings and fly away, or be burned up; lest she should at last die in the poor house.

She said that to the young preacher, again and again, until at last, he turned and said to her, as tenderly and faithfully as he could: "What does it really matter, dear sister, at last, if you trust your all to CHRIST, if you should die in the poorhouse? GOD will send His chariot to carry you home, whether you are in a hovel or a mansion, if you really trust Him as your Saviour. Put your fears away."

I am thinking now of an old farmer, and his case essentially describes us all, I judge. He had to make a train at a certain hour in the early morning. He lived some three or four miles out there in the country away from the railway station. And so he set his alarm clock to rouse him, that he might reach the station at a certain hour; and then, wonder of wonders, he sat up and watched the alarm clock, to see if it went off at the time he set it!

Now, we smile at that, but isn't it true that we are smiling at ourselves? Oh, how our fears harass us, and corrode us, and appall us and enslave us, and dispirit us! The great promise to-day would teach us to put our fears away, once and forever.

Let us look at this promise yet a moment further. What is it? "**As thy days**" - not as thy weeks, not as thy months, not as thy years, not as thy seasons - "**as thy days.**"

GOD comes to us saying: "Live one day at a time. Cling to me, and do my will, and stand faithfully at your post, one day at a time, and all shall be well."

- You say: "We want to see long stretches at once."

- You say: "We want to see years, with all their hidden secrets and undisclosed meanings, in one little day." But that is not GOD's way.

- You say: "We demand that the long future shall tell us its secrets," and it refuses to do it.

JESUS comes, saying: "Take it one day at a time. And from morning until noontide, and from noontide until the nightfall, and when earth is wrapped in the shadows of the night, just one day at a time, take it, and cling ever to me, and even the seeming defeats of life shall be turned into triumphs."

Note well the limitation to the promise. It says: "**As thy days**" - you see how comprehensive that is; that includes all the days, whatever they are, however they come - "**so shall be thy strength.**"

Some days are dark, and other days are bright. Some days, we feel more and drink deeper of the awful draught of human pain and experience and wounding and surprise and wonderment, than in thirty whole years beside. Ah, me! Some of us know about it. Some of us know what it is, in one short day, to have had more pain and battle and wonderment and agony and surprise - in one short day when the heavens were all darkened, when neither sun, nor moon, nor star would shine at all - some of us have known more of suffering in one dark day like that than in thirty years beside. But this promise covers a day like that.

Job had his black Friday, when everything was swept from him - servants and property and children and health and friends - and even his own wife - GOD save the mark! - said to her husband: "**Curse God and die!**" And Job simply said: "**Let come on me what will, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.**" And out of the deepest depths he came again to higher heights than ever before. That is GOD's promise.

Some days are little, and some days are large, and in all those days, commonplace and ordinary and routine days, JESUS says: "**I will be with you.**"

And then when come life's testing days - days big with meaning, with terror, with pain, with duty, with trial - JESUS stands there to fortify us as we go on clinging to Him.

And then there comes a last earthly day - the day of death.

Somebody asked Dwight L. Moody if he had dying grace, and he said: "Why, no. I have living grace, but when I come to die! shall have dying grace."

And when they carried him home from a meeting he was conducting in Kansas City, where a fatal sickness had seized him, there propped up on his pillows, with his loved ones around him, he looked at them, and then looked up into the open heavens, and said:

"The world is receding. Heaven is opening.  
GOD is calling me, and I must be away."

He had dying grace when death came.

I recall very vividly the recent going away of the wife of one of our most honored Texas judges. She had said to me again and again, that she greatly feared she was not a Christian, and her fear came because all her lifetime she was in bondage through fear of death. She never went to a

funeral, or into a death chamber, if she could avoid it. She had that unspeakable fear of death which is described in that Scripture which says: "**Who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**"

I said to her again and again: "Mrs. So-and-so, if you are trusting CHRIST" - and she would say: "If I am trusting Him? **Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.**"

And then I said: "If you are trusting Him, when the day comes for you to go, His grace will be sufficient, and if you are conscious that day, you will know that it is sufficient."

And the day did come a little while ago, and the nurse and the doctor were there, and she turned her lustrous eyes to the doctor, and said: "Doctor, what is this?" And he did not reply. He was a very dear friend of the family.

And she said again: "Tell me frankly, doctor, is this death?"

He said: "Yes, Mrs. So-and-so, it is death."

And then she turned to her husband, and she said: "Oh, dear husband, you know this is the hour that for thirty year. I have dreaded. This is the hour of all hours I have shrunk from." And then she said: "Husband, don't you see that face? Don't you hear that music? CHRIST is here. I have never known such rapture of light and peace and joy."

And in a very flood of celestial glory the timid wife went out into the night, and through the night into the land Elysian. She found that GOD's grace was sufficient.

Will you take this promise to-day and make it yours?

Will you take this promise and incarnate it in your life?

Oh, if you will cling to JESUS as your Saviour and the Master of your life, if you will let Him come into your life and save you His own way - and He will never save you any other way but His way - and then let Him guide you His way, and let His will be the law of your life, and let His program be fully accepted by you as your program, you will turn the battle back from the gate, no matter what it is, and you will have days of Heaven upon the earth, no matter what else you have. He will verify to you this promise through all the days, and He will love, and He will guide, and hold, and help, and lead you, till the day is done.

There is just one concern for everyone of us to have, and that concern is to be faithful to JESUS CHRIST.

There is one thing I want to hear from Him at last, when I shall see Him face to face - one thing I long to hear - and that is that blessed plaudit: "**Well done, good and faithful servant.**" His challenging word is: "**Be thou faithful unto death.**" He does not say "until death." He does not mean that.

He says: "**Be thou faithful unto death**" - faithful to the dying point. Die any time, and die

anywhere, before you will be unfaithful. The one supreme canon of human conduct is: "Is this right? Then I will do the right, though the heavens fall." **"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give Thee a crown of life."**

Out of my boyhood there comes a memory - you will allow me to speak of it - one of the tenderest memories of all my life.

Many have been the days that, far back in the mountains, hard by the little country schoolhouse, I have sat beside another boy, 14, 15 or 16 years of age, and we have builded our air castles, as boys will, and as they ought to do. We dreamed our dreams. He was going to be a victorious business man, and delight the world with his philanthropy and service, and he has already made good. And I was going in another direction. I was going to be a lawyer, and give my life to that noble calling.

The flying years came on, with their many changes and deeper questions.

This young fellow came to the great West earlier than I, and afterward, GOD met me one day in a quiet country church house, and from that hour I have traveled another road.

The years have passed since we used to have those dreams together, beside the modest, country school house.

A little while ago I was this big man's guest, in his own fair home. His community had arranged a notable public occasion, and had me as their invited guest, to speak to them. I was a guest, of course, in Jim's fair home while I was there. And after the address, and when we had had our meal, and after the hours had galloped away like minutes, I said: "Now, Jim, I must make ready to go to the train."

He said: "Well, we will walk, if you don't mind it, that we may talk like we used to talk in the far-off hills."

And out of the years we talked, and talked, and then he said: "Would you like for me to tell you the sweetest memory out of all my life?"

Of course, I wanted to hear it, and he reminded me that his Father was an invalid for years, and that he who was conversing with me was the only boy, in a houseful of sisters, and that the burdens of the family fell on him, while sometimes he would chafe under the burdens, they were so trying and so heavy.

One day the invalid Father sat on the porch in his deep chair, as was his wont, and Jim said to him: "Father, couldn't you attend to certain little chores at the barn to-day?"

He answered: "Why, certainly, son."

Jim said: "I will be until after dark, plowing in the lower field, and if you can attend to those little chores, it will help me."

The Father said: "Certainly, my boy, I will be so glad to do it."

Jim came in after nightfall, and came to the porch, where sat his Father, and they commenced talking, when Jim remembered and asked his Father: "Did you look after the little chores at the barn?" And, with a pitiful sigh, the Father said: "My boy, I am ashamed to tell you, I forgot all about it."

And then Jim said that the hot words of impatience, for he was tired, were ready to fly from his lips, but he swallowed them back - GOD forgive you and me, when we do not swallow them back! - and Jim said: "Never mind, Father; I can fix it in a few minutes, and then I will come back and tell you some splendid news about the lower farm. I will soon fix it. Don't you worry, Father."

And the old man said, with surpassing pathos in his voice: "Come back now, Jim. Come back now - right now."

Jim came back, and the old man said: "Come where I can feel you. I can barely see you in the day time, and cannot see you at all after night."

And Jim came nearer, and the Father put his hands upon Jim's head, and then the old man sobbed for a minute or two, unable to speak. And when he could speak at last, he said: "Oh, my boy, GOD bless you, just because you are always so faithful to duty! You will never know what a comfort you are to me, you are so faithful, my son, to duty."

Jim could not speak after that; of course not. What boy could speak after a speech like that from his Father? And Jim turned away, and attended to the chores, and came back singing a few minutes later. A boy who lives like that has a right to sing. And as he approached the high porch, where his Father sat in his deep chair, he began talking. "Father," he said, but there was no response. And again he said: "Father," but there was no answer. And he was beside his Father immediately, touching his pulse, but it was still, and the hand of the son was thrust above the old man's heart, but it had ceased to beat.

Out of the weariness and pain of life, the tired old man had gone to that land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain. And then this great citizen of the West, one of the worthiest the great West has ever had, and one of the most useful, said to me, with a sob: "Oh, sir, the sweetest memory of all is Father's word, 'GOD bless you, my boy! You are such a comfort to me, because you are always so faithful to duty.'"

You want to hear that at last, and so do I, when we stand face to face before Him whose we are and whom we live to serve.

Let us cling utterly and only and always to CHRIST.

Let us trust Him till the day is done, and then go to be with Him and to be like Him forever.

### **THE CLOSING PRAYER**

And now, as the people go, O Lord JESUS, speak thou the word in season to our every heart. From to-day, let us go to live the life which is life indeed. Let parents here set themselves, with a devotion that sin and Satan cannot break, to put CHRIST first forever, whatever His way and wherever He leads, and they shall walk in a path crowned with the days of Heaven upon the earth. May thy mercy come upon all the people of this vast expanding city, charged as it is with such responsibilities, and freighted as it is with such destinies. O, touch thou this whole city with the touch of GOD to-day. And to-morrow, when the people meet in their every place of worship, may they worship Thee in the beauty of holiness, with the favor of GOD upon every preacher, and upon every church. and even upon those who may not go to church and may have no care for the things of GOD and their own souls.

Save the people, O GOD, and they shall be saved, and the glory shall all be thine.

And as you go now, may the blessing of the triune GOD be granted to each and all, to abide with you forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 22 ~

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