

THE POSSIBILITIES OF A LIFE

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:24.

Seeing a beautiful harp, I wondered what possibilities it would show forth could David play it as he played before King Saul. Seeing a piano covered with dust, I wondered what its possibilities would be could Beethoven or Mozart lay hold upon it. Counting the pipes of a great organ, I wondered what its full breath would be if the keys were pressed beneath the fingers of Mendelssohn. Holding a slender violin in my hand, I could faintly conceive of its possibilities under the hand of Ole Bull could he return and play as he did on his American tour. I have looked at tubes of paints and brushes of hair and squares of cloth, and I have been stirred into enthusiasm when I thought on the possibilities of them were a master artist to use them. What possibilities if Apelles, who painted grapes so wonderfully that birds picked at them on his canvas, would but take them and make them what they were capable of becoming.

But, far above all and far beyond all that I have mentioned, is the rare rapture which comes to my heart when I behold a fine group of young people. What marvelous possibilities in you and through you and by you and with you and for you under the mastery of Christ! What great possibilities if salvation is received and a full surrender to Christ is made! What heights are attainable -- if you will just give Him the continents rather than the corners of your personalities! What mighty works will show themselves forth in you if you will do His will! I would have you to think with me about:

I. The Possibility of Salvation.

1. The need of salvation.

This need exists because "All men have sinned." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The most fearful of all realities is sin. We cannot drown the stench of sin's carrion under flood tides of philosophical perfume. Sin, a fatal mischief of the heart, a seed big with future pain and grief, the quintessence of all horrors, the causative element of all world suffering, is no whirlwind creating a slight disturbance, but a hot sirocco blasting all gardens. It is no light discord, but a thunderbolt that shatters the organ into splinters, leaving it without shape or tone. It is no pen knife but a guillotine. It is no slight jerk of hiccoughs but the agonies of sciatica. It is no lame Mephibosheth but a diabolical Jezebel. It is no crude catapult but a bursting bomb. It is no cool rill but a perpetual lava rush scorching its way through green fields. Yes, there is something to save you from, with blood of Jesus Christ, and to--a life of respectability, personal victory, Christian service, and a home in heave.

2. The way of salvation.

Today, this poor old lust-burning, war-scared, head-dizzy, body-weary, soul-sick, sin-damned, devil-prodded, iniquity-smitten, liquor-loving, hell-bound world cries out to Science, saying, "Can't you save me?" And Science telling us how far the

earth is from the sun, but not able to tell us anything about how far God removes a sinner's sins from him, shakes her head and says, "No, I cannot save you." And this world, storm-tossed and driven, stretches out piteous hands of appeal, and cries mournfully, to Education, "Can't you save me?" But Education, shaking a truthful head says, "It is not in me to save you." And to Philosophy, tossing its taffy and messing around in its mud, the world bowed down and broken cries, "Can't you save me?" But Philosophy, its lance broken on hard problems, says, "It is not in me to save you." And to Sociology, the world bound and blind, and grinding at the mills of materialism, turns, crying out as one who calls in a wilderness for a lost son, "Can't you save me?" But Sociology, knowing that you cannot cure a smallpox patient by putting the patient in an art gallery, gives a sad "No." And the world, sad and bad, diseased and disgraced, turns to Medicine, crying in frantic despair, "Can't you save me?" But Medicine says, "I have nothing to cure the diseases of the soul." And the world on the down-grade and despondent, turns to Culture, asking, "Can't you save me?" But Culture, putting bejeweled fingers on the world's cancerous ulcers, says, "I cannot save you." And still, even now, this speed-crazy and demon-driven world, with its collapse in the home and corruption in the state, bruised and battered by the boomerang it has thrown out, turns to all its man-made schemes and asks them, "Can't you save me?" But all these man-made schemes with a woeful sense of inadequacy pressing heavily upon them, say, "We cannot save you."

But there is ONE who can save -- Jesus, "able and willing and mighty to save." Yes, Jesus can and will save. He saves those who:

1. Realize they are lost.
2. Realize they need to be saved.
3. Realize they cannot save themselves.
4. Realize that Jesus Christ has provided for their salvation.
5. Repent of their sins.
6. Really believe on Jesus Christ.
7. Receive Him into the heart and life.

3. The results of salvation.

- (1) Peace with God.
"Being justified by faith we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."
Romans 5:1.
- (2) The greatest possible joy.
"Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I Peter 1:8
- (3) Hope.
- (4) The highest manhood and womanhood.
- (5) The favour of God.
- (6) Christ's acknowledgment in the world to come.
- (7) Eternal life.

II. The Possibility of Success

1. Success is desirable.

Everyone wants to succeed. It is only natural that they should.

2. Success is Possible.

That is evident when we recall the successes of various men and women who, it seemed, had no chance whatever to succeed.

- (1) Louis Pasteur - biological chemist and pathologist - paralyzed at 46 - worked on 27 years - contributed to nearly every branch of physical and natural science.
- (2) Henry M. Stanley - explorer of Africa - illegitimate - made more geographical discoveries than any other in Africa.
- (3) John Milton - poet - blind but wrote.
- (4) Beethoven - composer of music - dead mother - drunken father - left home, contracted illness, became deaf - unsurpassed master of instrumental music.
- (5) Demosthenes - weak lungs, shrill voice, ungraceful actions. Greatest orator of ancient world and among foremost since.
- (6) Fanny J. Crosby. She lost her eyesight at the age of six weeks. At fifteen years of age she entered an institution for the blind in New York City. Later she became an instructor in Greek and Roman history there. She wrote more than six thousand gospel songs.

3. Success is attainable.

Everyone of you has within you the elements of success provided you are willing to pay the price for success.

III. The possibility of Service.

Service is a great word but a greater thing. Service is a much larger thing than we sometimes think, its deepest meaning is "to minister to another." Jesus said, "I am among you as He that serveth...whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." The name of Jesus Christ lives and is more potent this hour than ever, because He took a towel and exemplified love in service.

1. The need of service.

Facing the world's dark tragedies, its innumerable woes, its deluge of blood and tears, its chasms, its wars, its bloodshed, its wanderings and wanderings and wickedness, we must turn from mere philosophic finery to the plain sensible language of the Christian religion which heartens men to really serve.

I wish that I might get you to see and believe that the sweetest songs are yet to be sung, the noblest poems are yet to be penned, the greatest books are yet to be written, the finest sermons are yet to be preached, the truest lives are yet to be lived, and the most heroic exploits are yet to be achieved. What the world needs is service. Its wrongs cannot be righted, its grievances cannot be redressed, its injustices cannot be corrected, and its ignorance cannot be dissipated, except by service.

2. The way of effective service.

Only as we let Christ rule us and use us will we come up to the fulness of our

possibilities in genuine service. But what wondrous possibilities in us will rise in majesty to meet His own if we let Him who went about doing good completely dominate us.

Livingstone, the weaver lad, gave himself to Christ and served Him. He thereby opened a highway over which Ethiopia stumbles with outstretched hands toward God. Moody, the bootstore clerk, served Christ by rocking two continents toward God. John Bunyan was placed in jail for serving Christ and while imprisoned he wrote a book which crawled out from the jail and traveled over more highways and knocked at more doors and spoke to more people in their mother tongue than any book save the ONE BOOK, the Bible.

A twenty-year-old boy captain lay on the ground one night on the battlefield of Kenesaw Mountain. A stretcher bearer, seeking for the wounded, bent down over him to try to hear heartbeats. He arose and said, "He's gone! His chest is blown open." They went away and left that pile of bleeding flesh in the darkness. That heap of bloody misery lay there through the night--no bedding but the ground, no pitying eyes but the stars, no voice but the night bird's shrill call and the fox's yelp, no hand but the fingers of the dew, and no companions but the dead.

Up in a little town in Massachusetts a father and mother had been praying for this boy through all the months of fighting. That boy had run away from home twice. At Yale University he had worked in kitchens and wherever else he could find odd jobs to pay his tuition. He had become "wise" as youth sometimes become. The University had knocked his religion into a cocked hat; he was known and registered as an atheist. And this looked like the end. But there was life in that body. In the brain a mighty parade of thought was passing. All that his father and mother had taught him of religion and God came back to him. He was converted there that night waiting for someone to come and pick him up. The next morning when someone came and found him alive they took him to the hospital. What was the possibility of that bleeding battle-bruised boy? The stretcher bearer thought none. The seekers for the wounded thought none. But what became of that bleeding boy who was thereafter dominated by Christ and served Him? For one thing, the great Temple University of Philadelphia through which have passed far beyond a quarter of a million students. For another thing, three great hospitals. For another thing, the education of hundreds of young people, to which object Dr. Russell H. Conwell donated more than eight million dollars earned in lecturing. For another thing, a great preacher, a great church, and twenty books superbly written and widely read and far-reachingly influential. For another thing, one of America's great men who, though he earned millions of dollars, never had more than \$100 of his own at any time.

Not all win renown on earth who serve Christ. Not all will be famous as Russell Conwell was famous. Not all will be in large type. The only chance you may have to serve God may be in small type or as a comma or exclamation point. But that doesn't lessen the possibility of great service.

The life that is spent in the service of Christ is a saved life; but, the life that is spent for self is a lost life. What are you going to do with your life and its possibilities?

With your diamond talents, will you do pewter work? With your incandescent light abilities, will you make tallow candle light? With your pipe organ opportunities, will you do harmonics work? With Winchester powers, will your aim be that of the pop-gun? With your steam shovel talents, will you dig with a spade? Will you be

guilty of embezzlement by robbing Him of yourselves, of your talents, using what has been entrusted to you as if it were your own? God forbid! Some years ago the King of England opened the conference on disarmament. A small room in New York City was carefully prepared to receive the whort wave and broadcast it to America. A moment before his speech was to commence, a careless workman passing through the room tripped on the connecting wire and broke it. Mr. Vivian, in charge of the apparatus saw the situation and knew that it would take twenty minutes to repair it. Vivian sprang forward, gripped one end of the wire in one hand and held the other end in his other hand for twenty minutes and let the message go through his body. He was the connecting link. Let us be that, too.