

WHERE THE LIGHTS GO OUT

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Luke 19:41-42.

Jesus is on a mountain overlooking Jerusalem, the great metropolis, in and around which the interests of the world had been and were ebbing and flowing. Jerusalem was the most renowned city in all that day. When the Israelites thought of Jerusalem they were filled with a pardonable pride. They exulted in its power, rejoiced in its resplendent history, and were charmed by its beauties. It was a most privileged city. The Temple added to its fame. Its people were blessed by the prophets; the priests walked its streets; John the Baptist awakened the interest of its inhabitants. To climax all these religious privileges, Christ blessed it with His presence, words, benedictions, and loved it more intensely than anyone else could love it. He walked its streets, opened the eyes of its blind, healed its sick, comforted its sorrowing, called its wayward to repentance, and pointed out its dangers. In this city He ate the last passover, instituted the Lord's Supper, was betrayed, suffered the agonies of Gethsemane, and on the brow of Golgotha died for the sins of the whole world. Has any city been so blessed religiously as was Jerusalem? Yet, as Jesus looked over the city He saw more than its splendors, beauties, charms, and historic significance; He saw the people of the city whose sins, negligence, iniquities, had brought on the impending doom which hung just above the spires of the city. He saw more than its glories; He saw the cankerworm of decay eating at its very foundations, and heard the crash of its impending doom. He saw its marred manhood, unhappy homes, poverty, intemperance, impurities, iniquities, drunkenness, as well as the gay, careless city illumined by the kiss of the smiling sun. He saw more than its fancies; He saw the grim realities it faced. Noisy, pleasure-loving, gay crowds, beautiful buildings, and resplendent history could not blind the eyes of Jesus to true conditions. He knew that this proud, capital city had rejected Him and His teachings and had shut its eyes to its one supreme opportunity.

Judicial blindness, brought on by moral perversity, had brought this people to the crumbling edge of doom. As Jesus stood in full view of it, seeing its possibilities, reviewing its history, He saw it rushing on to an inevitable catastrophe -- a catastrophe which was to bring its irretrievable loss and unavailing regret. No wonder He cried: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:37-38. Text.

I. There Is A Day Of Opportunity.

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!"

1. The day of opportunity is a glorious day.

Just think of the opportunity to live, to have the use of one's senses, faculties, limbs, health and strength, with the privileges of life! Think of the privilege of listening to life's calls, of being stirred by its challenges, weeping with those who are broken-hearted, and rejoicing with those who are happy. Think about the glorious opportunities in the realm of the spiritual. What a blessing unmatched in which we may prepare really to live, to meet God, and to serve. All of us have our opportunities. Every sermon we hear, all heavenly music to which we listen, every church bell which tolls, together with all nature tells us that this is our day of opportunity.

The memory of Christian mothers not only reminds us of our day of opportunity, but makes us want to hasten to accept it. During the first World War, Dr. S. J. Porter preached to a group of soldiers in a camp. When he had concluded his message, he did not announce a hymn, but asked the men in Khaki what they wanted to sing. A fine, big fellow responded at once: "Let's sing 'Tell Mother I'll Be There.'" As they sang that song, twenty men confessed Christ as their Saviour.

There is but one thing that can satisfy a human soul, and that is Jesus. How pitiable it is to see people feeding their soul or trying to do so on the husks of the world! Jesus, and He alone, can save the soul. "Behold, now is the day of salvation." Do you not thank God for the glorious day of opportunity that is yours?"

2. The day of opportunity is a limitless one.

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

By a limitless day we mean that this opportunity comes to all of us. We are not saying that the day of opportunity is limitless in time. We are thinking of it as being limitless in scope with reference to the plan of salvation. In this day of universal opportunity we should eagerly, anxiously, and hurriedly accept Christ as our Saviour, and every golden opportunity that comes to us.

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

3. The day of opportunity is a limited day.

One is stirred as he thinks of how limited this day of opportunity is. Withal, it is limited to one life, and how short that life is! We are told that half the people born in America die by the age of sixteen; only five persons out of every one hundred who reach maturity live to be sixty. It is but a step from the cradle to the grave. Life is but a day, and a winter's day at that. It is easy to die. Here is the strong man, hale and hearty today, but tomorrow he is cold in death. "Our hearts like muffled drums keep beating funeral marches to the grave." Can you think of any responsible person breathing the ozone of God's goodness, basking in the radiance of His sunlight, protected in the arms of His love, overriding His wishes, spurning His Son's death, trampling all His mercy under foot, and coming to the end of life's day of opportunity without having accepted His proffer of salvation? "Today if ye hear his voice, harden not your heart." Life is short at longest. Time flees. Job says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." Emerson was right when he said, "Life masters itself while we are preparing to live." Will you drift, neglect, trifle, play with life, until the day of opportunity closes and you go out to meet God unprepared?

II. There Is a Day When The Lights May Grow Dim and Flicker.

The light of Jerusalem did not go out all at once. The light of the average individual, who has lived, passed through life, and died unprepared, did not go out suddenly. Their lights first grew dim, flickered, and went out. There are signs by which one may know that his light is growing dim.

1. The loss of desire for God.

We forget Him as we bask in the sunshine of His blessings. The opiates of the world dull the sensitiveness of our ears to His call and we go to sleep.

This is a danger point, critical and crucial. Once there was a railroad accident. The switchman was called to account for it. Trembling, he said: "I have nothing to say; I want to sleep." Think of a man sleeping at the switch! Think of a night watchman asleep who is supposed to keep vigil while the city slumbers! Think of a fireman sleeping while the city wrapped in a conflagration! More than that, think of a person sleeping when the light of his soul is flickering!

2. A seared conscience;

This is the result of moral insensibility. It is the paralysis of the soul. If you are insensible to the highest and best, you are approaching the precipice of irretrievable doom. For such a foolhardy cause every better impulse of your soul, every command of God, every good book, every song and saying; the life of Jesus, His words, purposes, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming condemn us. Awake from the stupor of your seared conscience and answer the clear call of God by repenting and accepting Him as your Saviour. Are you one who says: "My conscience is my guide"? Then just remember that a conscience, like a watch, which caused you to miss your train, may be all wrong. The watch, to be a safe time-guide, must be set by the chronometer from time to time. Conscience, to be a safe guide, must be kept true to Jesus.

3. Finding it easier to put off the day of salvation.

Once you were tremendously interested in your salvation. You had the feeling, deep and pungent, that you should become a Christian. Now you may have reached the point where you do not have the response to those high and holy impulses that you once had.

Dr. Chapman told about a Christian man inviting a young man to accept Christ. The young man replied: "I have a character that is rugged as the hills of Scotland. I do not need your Saviour." He began his moral descent in New York and went to the bottom, a moral scavenger in Chicago. The same man visited him in a Chicago hospital. When he entered, the young man raised his hand and said: "My God, sir, isn't it awful?" Then he said, "Get on your knees and pray for me." When the prayer closed, he lifted his hand and urged: "Tell every man you meet that sin is too mighty for him; the devil is too strong for him."

III. There Is A Day When The Lights May Suddenly Go Out.

"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Death, sudden or otherwise, may put your light out.

There is no question that death is on the heels of everyone. It grins in the face of every person in the world. The grim reaper may sneak upon you at any moment and put your light out suddenly. It has happened with so many; it can, it may, happen in your case. Why not be wise and accept Jesus as your Saviour before it does happen? If you knew that you would not have another day in which to prepare to meet God, would you trifle with your opportunity? You do not know that you will have another day, do you? Every dictate of wisdom, every reason of logic, should lead you to settle the matter of your relationship to God, now.

Tomorrow's sun may never rise
To bless thy long deluded sight;
This is the time, O then be wise,
Be saved, O tonight.

The second coming of Jesus may suddenly end your opportunity; put your light out. "For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." The coming of Christ will find many in the same condition that the foolish virgins were in -- their lights were out.

Before your doom is fixed by death or by the return of Jesus, accept Him as your Saviour and live. You cannot save yourself.

The withdrawal of the Holy Spirit will end your opportunity; put your light out suddenly. God's Word says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." To be abandoned by Almighty God is to be doomed to everlasting punishment.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!