

A GOOD DAY EVERY DAY

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118: 24.

These words when taken into consciousness and made a rule of life can change your life. If you will take these words and build your life around them, then every day, come what may, can be a good day.

It is strange and sometimes sad what life does to people. But even more strange and more sad is what people do to life. Life is a gift from God. It is a tremendous privilege and responsibility to live. When you handle life with skill, as God wants it done, it becomes a wonderful experience. And some people make it so. But unfortunately and unhappily there are many poor souls who foul it up terribly. All that you need to do to realize and appreciate this tragic fact is to read the daily newspapers and to listen to the newscasts over the radio or television, for therein you will find in condensed form the story of many who took this precious gift from God and messed it up.

An unhappy eighteen-year-old girl wrote the following note and then hanged herself. "A year ago, exactly, I made a sort of bargain with God or fate and this is my part of the bargain. I agreed that if something didn't happen in the past year to make life worth living, I'd quit living. That wasn't asking too much, but I didn't get it. Please don't think this is something brought on by late events. Suicide is a coward's way out, so I'm a coward. I just don't have the courage it takes to go on just existing." Not having built her life around anything, the poor girl put a noose around her neck and ended her life at eighteen. Sad, isn't it?

Another dispatch from Las Vegas, Nevada, carried the headline: "Ex-Chicago Banker Kills Self In West." It read as follows: "A note requesting that no members of his family be allowed to attend his funeral and asking that a local night club entertainer be engaged to sing 'Goodbye Girls -- I'm Through' at nonreligious funeral services was found today with the body of _____, former Chicago banker, in a hotel here.

Mr. _____'s body was found in the bathroom of a hotel suite he engaged six days ago. He had been shot through the head and a .38 caliber revolver was on the floor beside the body. He was the former vice-president of _____ Bank in the city of Chicago.

The note was addressed to the Bunker-Burke mortuary of Las Vegas and was tacked on the outside of the closed door of the bathroom. With the note was a placard reading, "Do not enter. Notify the Bunker-Burke mortuary."

There you have an eighteen-year-old girl with everything before her and a fifty-six-year-old businessman who had risen to the apex of material success. Neither of them had been smart enough to heed the answers which Christ gives, which could have made life endlessly wonderful for them. Fortunately, there are not many who descend into such extremes of failure. But here and there there are those who, while they may have achieved certain satisfactions, still do not find any great meaning in their lives, no deep throbbing joy, no sense of greatness in what they do, but as Hamlet said find life, "stale, flat, and unprofitable."

In contrast with this unsatisfying manner of life, the Psalmist was thinking of the glorious coming of Christ the Saviour. Every day that the promise of His coming was repeated in the temple service through the prophecies the Psalmist rejoiced. The promise reminded him of what he should be thankful for, the greatest blessing of all, the Son of God and the Saviour of men.

This is the day which the Lord hath made for you. It is also the day which He hath made for Himself, because it is to His praise and glory that you have arrived at this good

hour. He has been so gracious in taking care of you. It is by the grace of God that you are what you are and where you are.

This is the day of the Lord's own contriving, which an infinitude of divine love and grace has made possible. The word "contrive" carries with it a somewhat different shade of meaning than the word "make." Contrive implies previous planning, or building according to a preconceived design.

Every day we live is made by God for us to be glad and rejoice in it. Sometimes we wake to find the sky overcast. A gloomy atmosphere seems to fill every nook and cranny of our homes and we in turn become affected and influenced by it. The day just moves along at a snail's pace; all our plans are changed, and we feel like finding fault with everybody and everything. Do you think this is the proper attitude to take on and off day? God does not think so. He says that we should "rejoice and be glad." Why? Because He made the day, allowing the gloom and the lack of sunshine. God wants His children to be free from the influence of outside conditions. If we are happy only when there is a joyous atmosphere about us, then we show to the world our own joy instead of that which comes from His indwelling.

Every day has its contributions to make to your life. If all days were full of sunshine, you would not appreciate God's goodness and you would never know the meaning of comfort and divine grace. The day of bereavement teaches you to lean on God without murmuring; the day of loss instructs you to lay up treasures in heaven; the day of sickness impresses you with the need of submission and points you to the Great Physician, Who heals. The day of sunshine and gladness is a divine encouragement balancing up the dark days.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." What a grand philosophy the Psalmist had! His philosophy of life is just as fresh and up-to-date as it was twenty-five centuries ago. In fact, his philosophy is even more needed in our crowded and hectic day than it was in the more quiet time in which he was privileged to live. We need to learn his secret. What was his secret? He had learned to live a day at a time. Regardless of what yesterday may have been or of what tomorrow might be, he lived joyfully today. In this business of living it is the height of wisdom to live one day at a time.

So far as time is concerned, your sole possession is today. Yesterday is as completely beyond your reach as the first day of Year One. Perhaps yesterday bored you. You may have found it not only tiresome but painful. Maybe it brought you some disappointments. Maybe you sigh with relief that you do not have to live again one of its painful hours. Perhaps others look back to yesterday with wistful eyes. Their past is full of delightful memories. Perhaps still others look upon yesterday with longing eyes because they realize that they did not use it well. Some are conscious that they spent its treasure for a poor second best. Worse still, there are those who chose to use yesterday to rob and wound others as well as themselves. Naturally these would like to get back into yesterday to tidy up a bit. They would like to give a few flowers that they failed to give. They would like to rub out a few ugly stains and to heal a few wounds. They would like another attempt at the game that they realized they played but poorly. But, regardless of what our attitude toward yesterday may be, it has gone from us forever. There is no way of getting into yesterday to change it.

Tomorrow is equally beyond our reach because it has not arrived. Some are trying to be absorbed in tomorrow. By attempting to postpone life they squander their finest opportunities and miss the choicest joys. The wise Psalmist refused to try to recover yesterday and to try to live in some tomorrow that had not and might not come. He took what was actually his — today — and rejoiced and was glad in it. We ought to live today because that is all we have. Live today because today is all we have, all we can manage, and all that we need. It is not the length of life but its quality that really counts.

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial."

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." If more people lived accordingly, this would be a different world. There would be fewer grouchy grumblers to take the joy out of living.

The most striking picture of a genuine Christian is a child, and the characteristic of a normal child is happiness. He cannot keep still for the sheer joy of living. The early Christians were the happiest people in the world, and little wonder. They had Christ in their hearts, no matter what the day was like. Gloomy days were just incidents, but Christ's presence was abiding and heaven was to be eternal. Maybe you are saying, "That sounds fine, but I don't feel like rejoicing today." Whoever said rejoicing was a matter of feeling, anyway? Being glad is an exercise of the power of the will. That is why Paul exhorted the early Christians to "rejoice evermore." Even in the dungeon in Rome he was happy and cheerful. Dark days did not get him down. He had his Lord and he was glad to be alive.

A certain survey was taken in the United States. It involved putting a number of questions to some thousands of people. And one question was: Which are you most interested in, your present or your future? Shockingly, ninety-four per cent of those answering said that they were merely enduring the present in order that they might finally reach the future. I was amazed to learn that there were so many people in this country in such a miserable state of mind. In the average human mind the future is out there full of hope and promise.

The past is often discolored with unhappy memories and most people are glad to walk away from it. The present is full of responsibility, difficulty, opportunity, struggle, etc., and we have trouble living with it. But the Lord has provided a future where our highest hopes and dreams and anticipations may come to realization.

"This is the day which the Lord hath made." He made this day, a precious thing full of opportunity; He gives it to me. How many more days will I have, anyway? I don't know; but as time passes each day becomes more precious. I must do something good with this day. So I say with the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Tomorrow morning you try that and see if it doesn't help make tomorrow a good day, no matter what you may have to face.

Now, of course, many people would say that a person must have some bad days. I know it is a fact that you will inevitably have some days that are pretty difficult, some days in which there is a lot of pain or sadness — that is true. But does that mean those days are necessarily bad ones? Eventually there will be a day when you will die. But is that a bad day? Not if you are a Christian. You will have some bad days, or days that are harder than others; but by adopting the philosophy expressed in this text you can take any day that has potential badness and make it good. This you do by taking a positive attitude toward the day.

Concerning man the Psalmist said: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands" (Psalms 8:6) Those tremendous words do not mean dominion over other people, for that would be contrary to God's will. They mean God made man to have dominion over himself, over his circumstances, over any tribulation life may bring to him. It is good to remind yourself that you are a child of God, and by the power of God that is in you you can handle anything with which you are faced in this life.

Every day can be a good day. Ah, but you may say, "Wait a minute! You know that there is variety in our days and you're just bound to have some bad days." To be sure, as

Longfellow wrote:

"Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary."

That is true. But just what is wrong with rain? And just what is wrong with some darkness in a day? Of course, there are going to be hard days. There will even be tragic days. But the important thing isn't whether you have dark days. It's what you do with the dark days. The important thing isn't whether you have hard, tragic experiences. It's what you do with the hard, tragic experiences. If you will look for good in every difficulty, you will find it. Sometimes you have to struggle to find it. This is something in life that people do not understand. Something they call "bad" happens to them, but they do not say to themselves: "Almighty God has buried something good in this. I'm going to find it." But the person who searches does find it, and later he looks back at that day which he said was a bad day and knows that it was a good one. Every day can be a good day.

Do you want to know how to rejoice and be glad in every one of the days God gives to you? Ralph S. Cushman tells you how in these lines:

"I met God in the morning
When the day was at its best
And His presence came like sunrise,
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long it stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed.
But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us a peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way ---
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day."