SADDEST OF ALL WORDS

"Almost Saved," and Yet Not Saved, Is to be Utterly Lost.

(Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Four, by Wm. Baily, of Toronto, at the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.)

A despatch from Los Angeles says: Rev. Frank De Witt Talmage preached from the following text: Mark xii. 34, "Thou are not far from the kingdom of God."

To-day I am going to try to help some of you to overcome that saddest of all words, "almost." I am going to show some of you that, like the scribe of my text, who came to question Jesus, you are "not far from the kingdom of God," but I am also going to show you that to be "almost" saved and yet not saved is to be lost completely and utterly lost. As the man whirling down the rapids of Niagara, who just misses by one inch the rope which is thrown for his rescue, so you who miss by a little the offer of redemption are as utterly lost as if you had never heard the offer. Nay, there is in your fate the unutterable sadness of being so near salvation and missing it after all. The loss of your soul is like the loss of life to the hunter whose rifle ball just misses the heart of the tiger that is leaping upon his defenseless body. It is to be lost just as much as were the poor fellows who were imprisoned a few years ago in the iron hulk of the steamers burning at the wharfs of Hoboken, in New York Harbor. Frantically they stood at the barred portholes. Frantically they stretched forth their arms through the iron gratings. They could see the blue waters of the harbor. They could hear the calls of the would be rescuers hard at work. But they were lost, entirely lost, though there was "only one step" between them and perfect safety.

A CHRISTIAN HOME.

Almost saved! Yes, you are. How do I know it? I learn how near you have come to salvation as I look at the entries on those white pages sewed between the Old and the New Testaments of the family Bible. By this record of the family births and deaths I find your father was a Christian. Your mother was a Christian. Your sisters and brothers were all Christians. I find also that your parents reconsecrated their lives for God's service when they held you before the sacred altar on the day you were baptized. It is a very easy matter for you to become a Christian, with such a family history as that. The son of a good doctor, all other conditions being equal, has at least ten years the advantage of a young man entering the medical profession who is not the son of a physician. The child who comes from a Christian home has a far greater chance of being a Christian than one who is not the son of a Christian, or than one who has never been brought by youthful association in contact with the Christian life.

"'Tis true," says some young man to me. "I was born in a Christian home. I am not near, however, but very, very far from the kingdom of God. Why, after I left my Christian home I seemed to be possessed not with seven devils, but seventy times seven devils. No sooner did I leave home and go away from mother and father and I plunged into a life of dissipation I drank, I gambled, I blasphemed. I did everything I ought not to have done, and I left undone everything I ought to have done. It is said that when Lysimachus was fighting against the Getae he was entrapped by his enemies in the desert sands. His thirst became so great that he offered his whole kingdom for a drink of water, as Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. But no sooner had Lysimachus slaked his thirst than he cried: 'Ah, wretched me, who for such a mementary gratification should have lost so great a kingdom.' Though I have been brought up in a Christian home, for the momentary satisfying of my evil desires I have stifled all those pure influences of the past. I am like a man who, to quench his thirst, has done more than to barter away a kingdom. I have bartered away my life. The chalice of sin which I have lifted to my lips was of poison. I feel it now, dulling my brain, dulling my heart, dulling my moral sensibilities. I feel as if I were already dead, for my nobler self has perished. Eternal life is lost to me." ...

DONiT LIVE FOR YOURSELF.

Almost saved! Yes, you are. I know by the unhappy looks that are chisled in the wrinkles of your face. When you started out in life you thought the height of a man's happiness could be estimated by the length of his bank account. You thought the worldwide area of his joy could be always circumscribed only by the hemispheric spread of his fame. But now by bitter experience you know that wealth and fame only bring added cares. You know that if a man lives for himself alone, if he does not seek the higher joys of the soul, if he does not live for Christ, seeking also the welfare of his brother man, he can find no happiness on earth at all.

I can imagine a scene in your life which brought its emptiness vividly before you. Such scenes, varying in their details, come to many a man, bidding him pause and consider what is the true purpose of life. Let me see! Where did this scene happen? In the east. You are a wealthy Chicago merchant. You have come out on a visit to Los Angeles. It was almost, as near as I can make out, on a Saturday night, the second week of January. The fire was burning brightly on your office hearth. The table by your side was filled with papers. The employees, working ten hours a day, sometimes think the employer entering his office at 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning has a very easy time. But long after the busy beehive of the modern drygoods emporium has stopped its hum, and the tired little cash girls have crowded the streets, laughing, shouting, perhaps smiling at the passers by, in juvenile delight at being set free from toil, and the bookkeepers have balanced the accounts, and the iron shutters have been pulled down, and the clerks have closed their counters, and the cashiers have locked their safes, and the delivery wagons have ceased their rumbling, and the worn out horses have been fed and blanketed in their stalls, and the street lamps have become as multitudinous as the visible stars of the heavens, the tired merchant works on. The wood in the fireplace crackled and laughed. The flames leaped higher and higher and sputtered more loudly as the reports of the different departments recorded the business triumph of a whole year. Stock had been taken, for the holiday goods were all sold. Every promissory note had been met. There was plenty of money in the bank to clear away the remaining debit sides of the ledger.

WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?

Was not that the history, O rich merchant, of the first results of your mathematical calculations on the Saturday night of the second week in last January? But what about the second calculation you made that important night? As you sat there in your easy armchair you began to dream about the past. You began to wonder if all this endless struggle for a worldly success really paid. As you dreamed you thought of the many nights when, unable to sleep you had tossed about your hot pillow and thought how the business world was trying to drive you to the financial wall, even as some man with the death marks upon his cheek in his old age may be fleeced of his all. You thought how your very best motives had always been impugned. And then, strange to say, instead of gloating over your past financial success as the fire flickered lower and lower an unseen power made you write upon a broad sheet of white paper this problem, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And as you studied that problem you were compelled to write after it a word of seven letters. You wrote that one word in letters of fire. "Nothing." "Nothing." "Nothing." Am I wrong, O financial magnate, in stating to-day "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God?"

Oh, rich man! I appeal to your experience. Have you not realized that happiness is not in wealth? Have there not come times in your life when you have felt that money and honor and power alike fail to give satisfaction? You are disappointed with your life. Turn to Christ, who says to such as you, "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst again." Come to him. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Sickness has been a spiritual blessing to you, O man, as the palsy was to the invalid of old. It has placed you almost within touch of our Saviour and King. For years and years you did not know what a pain meant. When you heard people complaining about their invalidism you had no sympathy. You would petulantly say, "Nine-tenths of these so called invalids are mere hypochondriacs. If men and women would only get up and stop their complaining and stop dosing themselves with medicines they would be all right." When a minister in church would preach from the text, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," you would settle back in your seat and smile. You would say to yourself: "Perhaps. Perhaps not. My ancestors were all long lived. I guess I will be also." Then you would complacently pat your chest as you expanded your lungs three or four inches, and you would say: "Well, my ancestors never had a finer breathing apparatus than I have. Perhaps I shall die to-night. Perhaps not."

But two years ago there came that sudden attack of illness. It came almost without any warning at all. You remember how your cheek became as white as that of a corpse and your lips turned blue and cold. You remember how that pneumonia stabbed at your lungs, or how that typhoid made you sink so low that for weeks and weeks you hovered between life and death. You remember how asthma choked you until it seemed as though you would go mad with the agony. Aye, that sickness made out of you a changed man. When the minister now announces the text, Luke, twelfth chapter and twentieth verse, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," you do not flippantly say: "Perhaps. Perhaps not." You know it is not out of the range of possibilities that this night you may be brought face to face with God at the judgment seat of Christ. O man, even while I speak to-day all the good and the bad of your past life are flying swifter than the winds through your seething brain. Aye, they are flying as swiftly as the panorama of bygone years in a second of time moves before the vision of a drowning man. Your past sicknesses have changed your feelings toward God. The pain at your heart is warning you that "God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." This day—aye, this very minute—on account of that past sick bed, "thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Almost saved? Yes; you are. I know it. Why? The many "signs of the time" tell us that hundreds and thousands of immortal men and women are now enrolling themselves as Christian soldiers under the standard of the cross. And there is a mighty propelling force in the power of numbers. When a sinful man knows that everywhere about him the people are asking the vital question which the Philippian jailer spake to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he in spite of himself is compelled to ask and answer in his heart the same question.

We all marvel at the wonderful ability of observation to which the trappers and the hunters of old were able to train their visual powers. For days and weeks the Indian scouts were able to follow their enemies across the western prairies. By the twisted blades of grass and by other minute signs they were able to tell how many Indians were in the war party ahead, how many horses and cattle and squaws and papooses. But, though hunters and trappers have almost miraculous seeing powers in reference to the natural world, it does not take an inspired vision to see that we are now living in a time of great religious awakening. Everywhere the vital question is upon every lip, "What shall I then do with Jesus, who is called the Chirst?" Like Pilate before the Jewish people, you must decide the question in reference to Jesus. You must decide for Christ or against Christ. And in bringing you up to this question I cannot be far wrong in stating that "thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

But why talk so much about the wonderful manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power in reference to the world at large? Have not we seen that power manifested in our own church? Men and women, can you sit stolidly in your pews when husbands and wives and children and young men and women are seeking Jesus Christ? While so many old people and middle aged people and young people are coming? God will never give you a better opportunity to seek him than just now. Will you not come to the Saviour now? Like King Agrippa, are you going to be "almost persuaded" and lost? Or like Paul, the "chief of sinners," are you to be coronated and to have a seat upon a throne in heaven with Jesus Christ?

THE S. S. LESSON

INTERNATIONAL LESSON. JULY 24

Text of the Lesson, II. Chron. xix., 1-11. Golden Text, II Chron. xix., 11.

It is pleasant, as well as profitable, to continue meditating upon one who did right in the sight of the Lord (xx, 32), for he sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in His commandments, and his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord, and the Lord was with him (xvii, 3-6). He is said to have reigned twenty-five years (xx, 31), but it is possible that three of those years were the last years of Asa, his father, while he was diseased in his feet. In order to keep before us some idea of where we are in the history of these two kingdoms, it would be well to consult a comparative chronological table of the kings and prophets of Judah and Israel, such as may be found in the appendix of most of our good reference Bibles. In a Baxter Bible it is New Testament, page 194.

From this it will be seen that the twenty-two years of Ahab's reign in Israel were about contemporary with the first twenty-two years of Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. The prophets of the time were Jehu, the son of Hanani, in Judah, and Micaiah and Ehjah, in Israel. It will help us to keep this in mind, as our next lesson concerns Ahab, and the six following keep Elijah before us. None of the prophets whose writings we have had up to this time appeared. Jonah, who is the first, comes later.

Our lesson begins with the return of Jehoshaphat in peace to Jerusalem from the battle with the king of Syria, in which he had been an ally with Ahab and very narrowly escaped death. Ahab, although disguised, fell by a God directed arrow from a bow drawn at a venture (xviii, 28-34). Jehoshaphat began his reign exceedingly well and sent teachers throughout all the cities of Judah with the book of the law of the Lord to teach the people, one result being that the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands roundabout Judah, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. The Philistines and Arabians brought presents as well as tribute to him, so that he waxed great exceedingly and had riches and honor in abundance (xvii. 9-12).

Then came his alliance with a man who did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him (xviii, 1; I Kings xvi, 33). He allowed his son Jehoram to take Ahab's daughter to wife (II Kings viii, 18), and also joined Ahab to fight against the king of Syria (chapter 18), hence the reproof of our Lord through Jehu in our lesson, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord (Verse 2.) One feels like saying, Why could not Jehoshaphat let ungodly Ahab alone and continue, as he had chosen, to walk with God? But is not this matter of worldly alliances the prominent sin of our own time? In marriage, in business, in religious matters, is it not seen everywhere? How few seem to give any consideration to II. Cor. vi., 14-18, and are there many even among God's ministers who think it wrong to have fellowship with those who deny that Jesus Christ is God, or with those who deny that the blood of Christ alone, without any works of ours, can take away sin?

The manner of Jeheshaphat's life was, as a rule, right in the sight of the Lord, although there were two very dark clouds in his clear day, the one we have mentioned, and later his alliance with Ahaziah (xx., 35-37). But it is refreshing to see him in the remainder of our lesson chapter, after the Lord reproved him, going out through all the people to bring them again to the Lord, setting judges in the land and admonishing them in such words as "Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you" (verses 5-7), saying also to the priests and Levites: Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. Take courage and do, and the Lord shall be with the good" (verses 10, 11, and margin). These are words for us to lay to heart, for only such living and acting will stand in that day. None other can have His approval (II. Tim. ii., 15). On the words "Take heed" see Luke viii., 18; Mark iv., 24, "Take heed now ye hear and what ye hear." Also Matt. xxiv., 4, "Take heed that no man deceive you." Isa. vii., 4, "Take heed and be quiet. Fear not!" As to the Lord's hatred of iniquity, respect of persons and taking of gifts, see Ex. xxiii., 8; Deut. x., 17; Job xxxiv., 19; Rom. ii., 11; Eph. vi., 9.

As we have but one lesson on the life of this great king we must not omit a glance at chapter 20, and the victory which the Lord wrought for His people. Realizing their helplessness, they cast themselves wholly upon Him, and the Lord fought against their enemies and made them to rejoice over their enemies, and gave them rest round-about (verses 3, 4, 27-30). Note the king's prayer (verses 6-12) and put verse 12 with xiv., 11: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do. But our eyes are upon Thee." These are the people whom God helps, the impotent, the utterly helpless, not those who can help themselves. Note, also, verses 15, 17, 20, 22, and learn to fear not, believe and praise.

This whole-hearted reliance upon the Lord made so prominent in this lesson and the last is greatly needed.

FROM BABY'S DIARY.

6 a.m.—Woke up and howled.

6.10—Man grunts, gets up, and carries me about room. Must be nice for him to be able to walk so fast; I can't.

6.15.—Man treads on my rattle; howl. Man talks to himself.

6.16.—Back to bed.

8 a.m.—Clock makes pretty noise; chuckle. Man says something to it. Woman says, "John!" Man grunts, and gets up.

10 a.m.—Washed and dressed; feel miserable.

10.10.—Climb into coal-scuttle; happy.

10.30.—Discovered and pulled out. Got to be washed again. Horrid nuisance; don't see the good of it; only get dirty again.

11 a.m.—Fall down stairs; given sweets, and go to sleep.

3 p.m.—Lady calls with thing she calls a dog. Can't find his tail; not like Tiny's; his sticks out and wags.

3.10.—Find dog's tail; wish I hadn't; howl. Dog whipped and turned out. Chuckle. Don't like that dog. Go and look for Tiny.

5 p.m.—Man comes home with a friend. Friend talks a lot of nonsense and tries to pat my head; howl.

5.10—Given bottle. Friend gets his head in way of bottle; chuckle. Friend departs abruptly.

6 p.m.—Just off to bed. Beastly quiet day; hope to have some fun to-morrow. Bye-bye.

GOOD ADVICE.

Do not learn the language of sorrow.

Don't try to steer with another man's rudder.

The time always comes when a grafter gets grafted.

Just take a bird's-eye view of the world. It looks better that way.

Be clean and the spirit of the eternal truth will rest and abide with thee.

There is no to-morrow, and it is only a very foolish fool who worries about that which will never come.

There is no person or thing in this world that gets something for nothing. Look and you will find the cost mark.

Feeding a girl chocolate creams once a week and feeding her breakfast three times a day are two different things.

When you say an unkind word or even think an unkind thought, just remember that you are hurting no one but yourself.

There are a great many people who look at the world through their stomachs, and their view is according to the condition of that organ.

The only difference between a Mormon and the other man is that the Mormon does what he thinks and the other man thinks what he'd like to do.

So-called friendship that is purchased and held by favors does the possessor no good. There is always someone who can furnish more favors than you.

"YE OLDE RED LION."

In the middle ages the country houses of the nobility of England, when the owners were absent, were used as hotels for travellers. The family arms always hung in front of the house, and gave it a popular name among travellers, who called a lion "gules" or "azure" simply "red" or "blue." As these were intimations of good cheer and entertainment, innkeepers adopted the idea. Lions have always been, and are now, very favorite signs in England, lions white, black, red, and golden—red being the most common. Probably the Red Lion originated with the badge of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who married the daughter of Don Pedro, King of Leon and Castile, and who adopted the lion rampant gules of Leon to represent his claim to the throne. Under Richard and John lions became the settled arms of England, and were generally used by those who could find any claim.

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