

WESLEYAN HERITAGE Library

Holiness Writers

YOUR LIFE
Make The Most Of It

By

James B. Chapman, D.D.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

© 1998

YOUR LIFE
Make The Most Of It

By

J. B. Chapman, D. D.

Third Edition
15,000 Printed

Printed in U.S.A.
1939

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE
2923 Troost Ave.,
Kansas City, Mo.

YOUR LIFE

Make The Most Of It

By
J. B. Chapman, D. D.

Your Life — Make the Most of It

At the Battle of Big Horn, when General Custer found himself and his little band surrounded by thousands of merciless savages, making escape impossible, he is said to have addressed his men in these brief words, "We can but die. Let us sell our lives as dearly as we can."

Circumstances brought home to General Custer and his men a fact which appertains to us all. We too can but die. We too should sell our lives as dearly as possible. At first blush this may sound like sinful ambition and we may be tempted to brush it aside. But that is because we are accustomed to think of life in terms of conquest over others, and to appraising its riches in terms of things possessed. The truly great are those who can manage their own souls, and the really rich are such as do not require either the gifts or the ministrations of others.

Elementary people, seeking to appraise your value, quickly ask, "How old are you?" for their supposition is that life is a straight line of given dimensions in every respect except length: therefore you are wise and important in direct proportion to your years upon earth. But life has breadth, depth and height, as well as length, and volume is the product of all dimensions: therefore one man may live more in forty years than another lives in a hundred.

Three score years and ten will mark the longitudinal extremities of life for the great majority of us, no matter how hygienically we may live. And within this brief span we must start and stop. For a full third of this time we shall be asleep.

But there are also limitations to the breadth of life. Paul counseled the Corinthians to be children in wrath. In simple words, be ignorant of sin. Fools, they say, will learn in no school except the school of experience, and tuition there is very dear. Observation should convince us that fire burns, strychnine poisons, and death will come without being pursued. We are wise only if we learn from others.

And neither can we believe everything. There are by-paths at every juncture, alleys that lead but to dead ends, and trails that lead only into the woods. The reputation of education has been marred by the aberrations of careless thinkers who have dubbed ethics mere conventions, and rejected all guide posts as obsolete. Loose living and lawless thinking are twin monsters which invite only to devour.

But the ship of tall sail must have the heavier ballast, and the tree of statelier stalk must have the fuller rootage. Depth, height, thickness or whatever the innermost realities should be called, is the principal content, and against this there is no law. A life may be both short and narrow and yet be big — if only it has that other quality for which we strive to find a name.

Live long if you can. And it is encouraging that right living is handmaid to long living. Good health, a sound heart, firm muscles, steady nerves and buoyancy of physical life are factors in the game, but they are not the goal. Possess them if you can, but if they are denied you, be versatile, and get along without them. Life to be rounded must go forth on four feet in the morning, walk briskly on two in the middle of the day, and come limping in on three in the evening. But if you are denied a rounded life — well, make the best of the life with the abrupt ending. Live widely if you can. Read books, travel, get acquainted with people, cultivate a love for art and an appreciation of nature. Knowledge and experience are men's servants, but they must not become masters. If they come your way, lay hold upon them. Give them welcome at your house. But if they pass you by, remember you still have the earth beneath your feet and the stars above your head — you can go deep and high, if you cannot go wide.

Live deep and high — and here I do not append the condition. To make the most of life means to make the most of it with its privileges and its limitations, and often the latter seem more than the former. There are physical limitations, mental limitations, financial limitations, social limitations — limitations and handicaps that would combine to influence us to be satisfied with less than our best, and whoever is so satisfied is lazy, even if he is honest, just as the man is a liar who covers his paucity of ideas with a multiplicity of words.

"What is that in thy hand?" asked Jehovah of the cringing, apologizing, alibi-seeking Moses. The answer was in the nature of a confirmation of the profession of insufficiency — "A rod." Moses was to stand before a king where spears and swords have voice. He was to discipline a crude people — a task requiring the generation of fear. But his weapon was only a rod. Just a dry stick which one might use as a walking cane. But God made use of such as Moses had, and He required Moses to make full use of it also. It was all he had, so he made the most of it.

This that you have, young man, young woman, is your life. It has its privileges and its limitations; it has its assets and its liabilities. It will no doubt be shorter than you wish — perhaps shorter than the lives of some you have known. Its scope will be more limited than you like. You will long for travel and for study that shall not be yours. But this is your life. It is all the life you will have. Initially it is God's gift to you. But it is capital to be employed, and not a fortune to be buried. By inheritance it is a boon from your parents immediate and distant. In the shadow of the great pyramid, Napoleon stirred his army by pointing to the great monument, and crying, "Soldiers, forty centuries are looking down upon you!" But all the centuries of the past are looking down upon you; for you are the last issue of all who have preceded you from Adam until now. In you all the centuries lodge their hopes — and fears. And you are the link between the past and the future. The future looks to you for its heritage. But God's gift, parents' boon, and future's source, it is yet your life — make the most of it.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE PERSONAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

More than a century ago a writer, whose identity I have been unable to establish, said, "There have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The majority of the one order live an honest life, doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God, but waging no downright warfare against the world nor making any strenuous efforts for the promotion

of Christ's kingdom. These aim at no special spiritual excellence, but are content with the average attainments of their neighbors. The other class of Christians not only abstain from every form of vice, but they are zealous, of every kind of good works. They attend the ordinances of God. They use all diligence to attain to the whole mind that was in Christ, and to walk in the very footsteps of their beloved Master. They unhesitatingly trample on every pleasure which disqualifies for highest usefulness. They deny themselves not only indulgences which are expressly forbidden, but also all those which by experience they have found to diminish their enjoyment of God. They take up their cross daily. At the morning's dawn they pray, 'Glorify Thyself in me this day, O blessed Jesus.' It is more than their meat and drink to do their heavenly Father's will. They are not Quietists, ever lingering in secret places, delighting in the ecstasies of enraptured devotion. They go forth from the closet as Moses came down from the mount of God, with faces radiant with divine glory, and visiting the degraded and the outcast, they prove by their lives the divineness of the Gospel."

John Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, brought his pilgrims into Beulah Land before they crossed the river of death. Here they were entirely out of sight of Doubting Castle, and in view of the Celestial City. Here the sun shone day and night.

Paul speaks of the heavenlies or heavenly places in Christ Jesus in which Christians sit together in blessed and unbroken fellowship. Such a place is a land of solid peace, unfailing victory, pure joy and blessed assurance.

All these are in contact with those who talk of the Christian life as something unsatisfying and impractical, and we can but conclude that men are accustomed, as in the days of the apostles, to tell the things they have seen and heard and experienced, and this leads us to conclude that there is an inner circle in Christian experience and life to which some have attained, and which others imagine does not exist simply because they have not attained it themselves.

"How shall we reach the masses?" "How shall we hold our young people?" These are the questions that distracted church leaders are wont to ask, and the usual answer is, "Make the program entertaining. Use motion pictures. Adopt operatic music. Stage spectacular preaching." And to the second question the answer given is, "Remove the ban from the dance, the theater and from card games. Major on the social life. Compete with the world in offering plans for pleasure. Out-world the world, and thus hold those for whom the world bids."

But it all reminds me of the maxim I used to hear in my boyhood days: "Never bet on the other man's game." The world can beat the church being worldly — it always has done so, and when the church becomes worldly it introduces cravings that it is unprepared to satisfy and its purpose is defeated. If people want the world they can find it better outside the church than in it. The church must have a better and a different bid.

Then there are those, well meaning people too, who think to induce people to become Christians by lowering the standards of the Christian life and experience and making it easy in the fleshly sense. My father was not a Christian in my childhood days. But once he came home late at night to tell about going to church at the insistence of a business associate, and to tell how his friend and others had gathered about him at the close of the meeting to urge him to join the church. He had excused

himself on the ground that he was not a Christian. But they had answered this by arguing that this should not deter him — he should join the church anyway, then perhaps he would become a Christian. It was all new to my father and the rest of us, and served only to make us question as to whether or not there really was anything in it at all. The editor of the official organ of the Northern Baptist Convention, commenting on the large proportion of losses over against the gains in the membership of the churches of that body, remarked that church joining has been made too easy. Men join the church with such little effort and so little preparation that they can go away and forget that they have joined at all. With all men's faults, they do not like to be coddled. The heroic has more appeal than the promise of indulgence. That branch of the army which is listed as most dangerous always has the longest list of applicants for service. And He who knew men as no one else ever has, challenged them thus: Unless a man will forsake all that he hath and take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple. The Christian life exacts much, but it promises more. The question is, How much do you want to invest in it?

Observing that the community was made up largely of church members, but that there were few signs of spiritual life, a thoughtful man said, "The people have had religious varioloid which has served principally to make them immune to genuine salvation." It was like this with many in the days of our Lord, for then, too, wicked sinners entered into the kingdom of God in greater numbers than did formal professors.

The same principle applies to Christian life that applies to knowledge in that the proper choice lies between drinking deep or else not touching the magic cup. But it were folly to suggest even this dilemma. There is no good life except the Christian life, and in the Christian life there is only one place of genuine satisfaction and that is the place of full devotion to God and of full reception of grace from God. Socrates, in his day, prayed that his inner power and outer demands might be at balance, and that is what we are promised in Christ. There is no demand in the law of Christ that is not fully answered in the supply of the grace of Christ. We have no right to use the words "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" as a separate text, for the passage thus read is mutilated. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" is an inseparable part of the exhortation.

Is there a place of complete deliverance from outward and inner sin in Jesus Christ? Is there a place of full assurance and unbounded peace in Him? May a Christian have unbroken fellowship with God? Is there a fullness of the Holy Spirit for every heart? Is perfect love a heritage of saints here on earth? Does the perfect love of Christ cast out the love of the world and bring one to the place where all desires are gladly subjected to His blessed will with no residue of irritation or worry? The answer is yes in every case, and those who will not be content with less than the best press on to full devotion and faith for the possession of such a place and state of grace.

In the Christian life grace responds to need and need encourages the conditions for further grace. Love for God generates love for the Bible, the Word of God; and care in the reading and study of the Bible makes love for God more intelligent and more real. It is indispensable that a Christian should pray, and prayer is a means for stronger faith and for fuller realization of God. The Christian will want to pay the tithes of his income into the work of God, and he will want to make additional offerings as the Lord enables. And the proper exercise of the office of steward is a help to all inner

virtue. Church attendance is both an expression of true religion and a minister to it. Righteous living is both a fruit of grace and a means for further bestowals of grace. In simple words, the Christian life is a unit of which experience is the subjective and right living is the objective phase.

If you want to break an egg, sharp point foremost on your forehead, the only counsel you need is, "Be sure to hit hard enough." For if you do not hit hard enough your head will take the blow and you will suffer pain. But if you hit hard enough the egg will take the blow and you will escape injury. The best way, we found as boys, to enter the swimming hole for the first dash in the spring is to go in with a splash — gradual approach only prolongs the agony. Likewise, life in the twilight zone between God and the world is a miserable existence. There religion has such a pull that one cannot enjoy the world, and the world has such a pull that one's religious satisfaction is imperfect. All exhortations to carefulness in dealing with God are out of place. We need no protection against Him. All caution to the winds! Leave all and find all! This Christian life is by right your life — make the most of it. May "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

MAKE THE MOST OF THE SOCIAL LIFE

No statement in the teachings of Jesus is more revolutionary in character than this: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We very nearly missed these words altogether. None of the four evangelists record them, and Paul mentions them (Acts 20:35) just passingly, as though they were too well known to require reference as to the time and place when they were spoken. And yet these few words set forth a philosophy of life that is the exact contradiction of what the vast majority of men believe, and they require practice that is the reverse of that followed by even the most decent of those who have not learned in the school of Christ.

Was Jesus right and all the world wrong? Is giving, not getting, the big thing in life? Do riches bring more sorrows to their possessors than they assuage? Is it difficult, almost to the point of impossible, for a rich man to get to heaven? Is godliness with contentment the true gain? Was Emerson justified in his complaint that "Things are in the saddle and riding us"?

A corollary of His statement on giving and getting is Jesus' statement on greatness, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." With Christ, the way up is down, for the great man is the man who can and does serve all men. The world's great are served. Christ's great are servants. Position is desirable only if it extends one's ability to serve.

Again, Is Jesus right and all the world wrong? Are the selfish unhappy? Is the served inferior to the serving? Is the man who exalts himself in perpetual danger of being reappraised and humbled thereby? Are the humble actually beating the appraisers by making it possible for them to do nothing but lift them up? Have the troubles of men and nations arisen from attempts to enforce the decrees of one will upon another? Shall the meek finally be the only ones left to inherit the earth, the ambitious having consumed one another?

The poet was right in his conclusion that whoever is true to himself cannot be false to another man. Also, whoever is true to God must likewise be true to his neighbor and himself. It is only our near-sightedness that causes us to think that at times it pays to "look out for number one." Duty cannot be divided and the real *summum bonum* includes all moral beings with whom we are involved. That which is for the glory of God and the good of my fellowmen is also good for me. I owe it to God, to my fellowmen and to myself to be as good and as big as it is possible for me to be.

Take the subject of education: too often education is presented as a means of "getting ready to live," or as a means for making a better living. In the old days it was preached as a means of making a living "without having to work for it." Within the last five years I have heard the president of a great university; in a baccalaureate sermon, present education as a means for increasing income. From such approach education is a dangerous, almost a wicked thing. But the approach is wrong. Education, first of all, is the building of a better personality, as much for the sake of others as for oneself. Education is a social possession, quite as much as a personal heritage. We owe it to others, as much as to ourselves, to build the best personality and make the best practical preparation possible. And from this approach, it is right and proper for us to say, "Make the most of education."

Two young men of my acquaintance, one a college senior and the other a college graduate of a few months, were accidentally drowned. Many of their acquaintances bewailed as unusually calamitous their untimely passing. Said they, "Why, these young men had spent most of their lives just getting ready to live Now their preparation is wasted." But was that true? I think not These young men were living in the fullest possible sense while they were preparing to live Their early passing was not nearly so tragic as that of another pair of young men who squandered their time and opportunities in worldly living True, these had thought and planned much for the future, but all men are better for doing that. They had pored over books and lent themselves to the processes intended for drawing out the best that was in them. But all men are better for doing that. They had filled their minds with information. But this too is a good thing for all. While getting ready to live these young men had lived more than their indifferent contemporaries. And it is always like that. There are no better years than those spent in school. Young man, young woman, make the best of your opportunities for education in both its formal and practical aspects.

"Heaven," says Dr. E. P. Ellyson, "has no greater factors than fellowship." In the scope of his term Dr. Ellyson includes fellowship with God and with all holy intelligences, and in such a view surely there can be no question about the accuracy of the statement. Even in this world, our friends are our principal fortune, Benjamin Franklin was twenty-six years old when George Washington was born, so that he was senior among the men with whom he worked in the most interesting period of his life. But when he was old he complained that he was lonely because almost all his early friends and fellow workers were dead. No matter for what reason a man finds himself without friends, he is lonely without them, but unless he continues to make friends all the way along, he is bound to see the day when he will have fewer friends than he has now.

I know there are exacting definitions of friendship, but I am not concerned with these now. There is no doubt a sense in which "Every man can count his real friends on the fingers of one of his hands." But that concept is too technical for our present thought. We don't need many friends like that. Perhaps we do not need any more of them than we have. But we need an unlimited number of

those friends that are close enough to become the recipients of our service, and who in turn are close enough to sustain us with their interest. I need friends to be the recipients of my favors. Only last week, I was embarrassed over my inability to recall the circumstances under which I was entertained in a good man's home. But I console myself with the thought that I do not forget those who accept my favors. And this was the interpretation of "neighbor" that Jesus gave in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In matrimony, that closest of all friendships, the Christian motive is best. Marriage for money, position or other selfish advantage is usually a failure. Dr. Anspacher says, "Marriage is best when independence is equal, dependence is mutual, and obligations reciprocal." The same authority, speaking of happiness, says: "Happiness is in being things, not in doing things. It is an attitude toward life — something you've got to achieve it is a by-product of other duties. It has no direct aim — it is gained on the way. No work in itself can make you happy unless you have a sense that you are important to something beyond yourself. Try to get into the right job so you can exercise your powers. Ambition must be related to capacity. We all have a capacity for something. Live within the potentialities of personality. Every period of life has its compensatory rewards. There is nothing more tragic than maturity among youth. The world is full of unhappy people — persons always looking toward a suspended future, while life in the meantime, is taking unreturning hours. Take for your friend the person who brings your best side out. Do not despise any one for being what he is not."

I have heard a Bishop describe a conversation which arose from the appearance of so many bleached ships along a certain foreign shore. Answering his inquiry, his informer had said, "The mariners of this particular country are afraid to go far out of the sight of land. They like to sail close to shore. But their fear is their destruction. When storms arise their ships are driven upon the rocks. If they were not afraid, and would launch out into the deep and get away from the shore, they would have a chance to save themselves in the storms; for a ship is safer out in the deep water than close to the shore."

The courage of youth is often criticized as foolhardiness, but such criticisms usually come from those who falsely imagine that shallow water is safer. "Be sure you are right and then go ahead" is a maxim good for all. And going ahead means more than just drifting, it means traveling under a full head of steam. That word "dynamic" has been worked almost to the point of exhaustion, but it's still a good word. It distinguishes active and energetic from passive and indolent. It is, it is true, related to "dynamite," but it allows for discretion. "Fear is the father of cruelty, courage is its only antidote."

The frontiers are no longer geographical, but they are no less real on that account. Every new man is essentially a pioneer; for he has before him a life that no one yet has charted. Standing upon the shore of the great sea, which is his life, every one must choose either to wade in the shallows or to swim in the deep. But the shallows have double danger. They have the danger of being inadequate and of yet permitting disaster in the storm. The deep has only one danger — and that is a factor of the swimmer rather than of the sea. You stand here now, young man, young woman, this sea before you is your life. God is for you. Make the most of this inviting sea!

MAKE THE MOST OF THE SAVING LIFE

William Booth was the conventional pastor of a conventional church in the city of London. But one night he had a dream or vision which changed his whole course in life. In his vision he found himself in heaven. At first he was gloriously happy with the thought that he was saved forever and that heaven was his eternal home. But soon there came a mother who inquired about the salvation of her daughter, who had been a member of Booth's congregation on earth. He remembered the girl, but could give no information about her spiritual condition, for he had never troubled himself to ask about that. Then came a father asking about his son. Others came, each with anxious inquiry about souls for whom Booth was responsible. But he could give no information or help; for he had not even tried to be a soul winner. He had just looked after the interests of the church passingly, and tried to, be an acceptable minister — just about the same as others around him. So now, he found himself miserable and unhappy in heaven, for each of his inquirers turned away with a look of disappointment on his glorified face, and Booth commenced to feel that he was out of place in heaven. At last the Lord Jesus Himself came and pointing to a distant star, asked Booth if he recognized it. Booth replied that it looked like the earth from which he came. The Master replied that it was the earth and said, "He, I have come to ask you whether you want to stay here now that you are safe in heaven or would you like to go back to that world to look after the saving of souls?" Booth fairly jumped at the chance to go back. And when he was awake he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but set about the business of winning souls as few men have ever done. And to the end of his life, soul saving was his business, and he accounted himself fortunate that he had the opportunity of seeking and saving the very souls about which people inquired during his brief stay in heaven. And he always said he was glad that now he could answer these same inquiries, should the sainted loved ones ask him again.

One of the favorite stories that William Booth, as General of the Salvation Army, used to tell related to a prospector and miner who was returning with a good load of gold dust and gold nuggets, after years away from home. The ship wrecked a short distance from shore. Some passengers were able to make their way to safety, some sank in the sea. The big, stalwart miner scanned the distance between the ship and the shore and decided he could make it even with his hoard of gold. But just as he was about to make his start, a fine little golden haired girl of seven or eight appealed to him, saying, "Big man, won't you please save me?" The miner's heart was touched. He left the gold to the mercy of the waves — representing, as it did, years of labor and toil and hardship and took the child on his back and made his way to safety. But did he ever regret his choice? No, he never did; for in the days and years to come he always accounted the life he had saved as of many times more value than all the gold in the world. And General Booth used to apply this to soul saving. And he used to remind his officers and soldiers that the souls they saved were of more value than all the gains the world might offer.

"Quiet Talk" Gordon used to tell an imaginary story about the time when Jesus returned to heaven from His mission of redemption on earth. The angels gathered about to hear of His incarnation, preaching, miracle working, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, and they marveled when the Master said He had provided a way so that all men could be saved and come home to heaven at last. After a time the angels asked, "Master, must men know about the provisions you have made before they can be saved by them?" The Master replied that they must. "Then," the angels asked, "do they

all know about it now?" To this the Master replied, "They do not know now, but I have told the few who do know to tell the rest." "But suppose these fail to tell the rest?" To this the Master answered, "I have no other plan." God has no other plan than to use you who know Him to make Him known to the others.

Demonstrations vary among Christians, according to their natural temperaments. But the desire to bring others to Christ is normal to every true Christian. Every Christian is not called to the public ministry, but every Christian is called to win souls. The fact that the layman does his work for souls unofficially is a great advantage. People expect a preacher to talk religion, it is his business. But when a layman shows evidence of being burdened to bring men to Christ there is no explanation for it except that it is an unselfish desire to do the highest good to men.

The mystery of the art of winning men to Christ has of ten been exaggerated. Love and sincerity are about the only indispensable factors. Some of the most successful soul winners would be utterly at a loss if they were asked to give an address on how to do it. They simply do it. They have no particular theories about the matter. Bishop Peck, although a great preacher, said, "If my eternal salvation depended upon my winning a thousand souls to Christ within the next ten years, I would not attempt to do it from the pulpit. I would come right down and go after souls personally."

Primitive people are often more simple and direct than those who account themselves highly civilized. Down in Guatemala, as time for the District Assembly came on, I found that men from a distance were starting toward the place where the meetings were to be held several days in advance. I asked about it, and the answer was, "Oh, they are going ahead so they will have time to "evangelize along the way." I asked about their methods of evangelism, and the answer was, "They just get into conversation with people and drift off into telling their experience in conversion and the joy they find in serving the Lord, and very soon they have an interest and sometimes they must stay in the community for a day or two. And sometimes they get a number of people saved." It's as simple as that, and yet there are so many of us that find no opportunities. But we do not. find them principally because we do not just take them. We imagine we would. stumble and halt and fail. But we should remember that others are just as we were, and then we should remember that our lives were influenced by the very unexpected.

A woman of splendid breeding, after years of waiting, decided to do something for the salvation of an old school mate, a man of affairs in her city. She called him on the telephone and invited him to church, and to her house for lunch after church. The man very graciously accepted. The woman prayed during the morning that the service at her church would be very orderly and proper that it might influence this worldly, skeptical man. But, at the close of the minister's prayer that morning, a dear brother proceeded to pray voluntarily, and he proceeded with many sobs and broken sentences, but concluded with praise and thanksgiving. Just as the preacher was ready to announce his text, a woman asked permission to speak. She testified that she had been sick the Sabbath before and had sent word to the church to pray for her healing. Now she felt it her duty and privilege to testify that God had heard and answered prayer, and that she was well to His glory. The rest of the meeting proceeded about "as usual." At lunch the worldly man said, "Mrs. B, I did not know there were any such churches any more as this one you and your husband attend. I suppose the sermon and the service were about what one would find in any church. But that man who prayed after the minister,

was genuinely in earnest, and more than that, he got help — he said he did, and I could feel that he did. And that woman who was sick last Sunday and well today, and giving God the glory for the change — well, that's the kind of religion I have dreamed about, but did not know it could be had." The very things which the woman had thought would disgust, were the only things that impressed the man of affairs. Yes, love and sincerity are the big factors in bringing God to men and men to God, and these are factors that an ignorant, new convert may have in just as full measure as old seasoned Christians. The fact is that new converts are often more successful than older Christians and principally because they are more zealous and sincere, and less professional and fearful. Not many souls are won by argument. Usually the winner is the loser in an argument, after all. The approach must not be silly or irrational, but it need not be particularly scholarly and polished. The man who helped me most to make my decision for Christ was an unlearned man, whose plainness of speech was affected by his loss of teeth. But there was no way to discount the fact that God was with him, and that he dearly longed to help someone find the Lord Jesus Christ. His arguments were not impressive, but there was only one side to the matter the way old Brother Townsend presented it, anyway. You had just to decide whether you would start the good, wise way or whether you would go on in the bad foolish way. It was as simple as that.

Young man, young woman, make the most of your saving life. Go after souls. Go after them the best way you know, but go after them. Do not listen to those who warn you that you will offend and drive away by your persistence. Go after souls. Go after them by public and private testimony. Go after them by service and by prayer. But go after them. Go after them with love and a burdened heart. Go after them by kind deeds. Go after them by song and praise. Go after them with exhortation and pleading. Go after them when they are in bereavement and sorrow. Go after them when they are especially favored of God and men. But go after them. This soul winning life is your life — make the most of it.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE MEDIATE LIFE

The old McGuffey's reader contained the story of a very aged man who was found one day planting a fruit tree. His discoverer discoursed to the old man on the fact that it was useless for him to plant a fruit tree, seeing there was little likelihood that he would live long enough for the tree to grow up and bear fruit. But the old man replied, "I have thought of all that. But some one planted trees that were here and bearing fruit when I came, and I want to plant some trees to take the place of those from which I ate fruit and which I did not plant."

The Greeks of course had the story of the relay race in which each new runner lighted his torch from the fire of his predecessor. And we all have been exhorted to pass on the heritage of political and religious liberty to the generation that is to succeed us.

It is a proverb that grandsons spend with lavish hand the fortunes the grandfathers earned with callused hands. And when periods of persecution have succeeded long periods of peace, there have been many who apostatized — ease gains such favor with those to whom it comes.

But we have been the recipients of a wonderful heritage — those of us who have found Christ through the preaching and testimony of holy men and holy women who have gone on into "the more

excellent glory." We cannot repay them directly. Our only chance to recompense is to pass this glorious gospel message on to those who follow us. The sons pay to their own sons the debt they owe their fathers.

There is the story of a man who moved from an eastern state to the "West" when he was yet almost a young man. He "took up a claim" in the new country, established his family altar in his sod house, and set in to live the life of a true Christian citizen. Neighbors were scarce, and one of the friendliest of them all was a skeptical man who lived on a near-by claim. These two men — the Christian and the skeptic — had many things in common and became great friends. In the course of time the Christian gently expressed the wish that his new friend were, like himself, a Christian. But the skeptic explained that he did not believe in Christianity, and did not believe in Christians. Said he, "I believe every man has his price. With one man it is a plug of tobacco, with another it is a bottle of liquor, with yet another it is a card game or a horse race. But whenever any man is offered his price he will do wrong. On that basis I believe all Christians are hypocrites in that they do not know or admit their true state. With you, I think you are a decent fellow, and your price is higher than the price of many others. But if you were ever offered a sufficient price you would steal or murder or commit any sin or crime. The chances are you will never have a bid that attracts you, but I still believe you would yield if that bid should come."

In the years that followed — until twenty years had come and gone — the skeptic renewed his argument every time the Christian brought up the subject. The men remained friends, and extended favors to one another in the way of neighbors in the old West, so that they were more like brothers than neighbors, but they never got any closer together on the question of religion. The whole matter became a growing burden to the Christian, who came at last to picture himself as dying and leaving his friend unsaved.

One day when the Christian was ready to start to the railroad town at which the men did their principal business, the skeptic, in that careless manner so usual in that new country, asked his neighbor to call at the Express Office to see if there was a package there for him. "My father's estate has at last been settled, and I am expecting my share of the money, which will be about five thousand dollars. If it's there, just bring it out. That will save me a trip to town.

The Christian found the package awaiting. But he was detained in town longer than he expected, so night overtook him while he was yet a considerable distance from home. At one of the loneliest spots on the road, a bandit stepped out from among the scrubby timber and said, "Hand me that package of money you got at the Express Office today." The Christian sat still in his wagon. The bandit spoke again. "You better hurry. I cannot wait long, you know." The Christian replied, "I have decided you cannot have this money until you kill me." The bandit cursed him as a fool, but asked for his story before he shot. The Christian told the story of his skeptical neighbor. "This is the first time in all these years that I have had a bid such as my neighbor would think appealing to me. There has never been a bandit in this part before. If I go home without this money, my neighbor will not believe my story. I am a poor man and can never repay the money. I shall have to go down to death with my neighbor believing that I am like he believes all Christians are — a hypocrite and a thief." After a little further parley, the bandit backed away and let the Christian continue his journey.

Fifteen years later, the bandit, about to be hanged in a neighboring county, according to the custom of the times, was given opportunity to speak from the gallows. He recounted a long story of crime in which he gave the details of the above story from his point of view. When the gist of the speech came out in the county paper, the skeptical neighbor came over and said, "That sounds like it might have occurred in connection with that little errand you did for me about as long ago as this man mentions." The Christian admitted the truth. "Then," said the skeptic, "I am as puzzled as the bandit. You risked your life for the sake of protecting your reputation as an honest man, but you never told it, and thus gained no advantage. Why did you not tell us about it?" "Because," said the Christian, "as I thought it over, I concluded you would not believe any one would do such a thing for such a purpose, and so you would come down to your grave believing I lied, and I would have no way of proving to you that it was like I said."

When I was a lad I once heard a preacher tell of a Christian man who was mortally sick. His physician said, "I have only one more remedy to give, and I will not give it without first talking to you about it. It is evident to me that you are going to die within a few days if I do not give you this last remedy. If I give it, there is a chance you may get well. But if the remedy does not have the effect I hope, you will die sooner." "How long will I live without the remedy?" asked the Christian. "A few days, likely not more than a week," replied the doctor. "How soon will I die if I take the remedy and it does not go as you hope?" "Then, you will die within a few hours?" "Well, I will take the chance, for if I am to die within a week, the difference between that and a few hours will not matter much." The remedy was given. The faithful physician waited. At length he examined the pulse and looked at the finger tips. Then a look of anxiety came into his eyes. "Doctor, does it mean that it has gone against me?" inquired the Christian. "It would seem so," replied the doctor. "Then, Doctor, I hope you can stay with me and see how a Christian can die."

Joshua died saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Stephen died saying, "I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Paul died announcing, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Alfred Cookman died testifying, "I am sweeping through the gates, washed in the blood of the Lamb!" Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army died, exulting, "I am not going under, I am going over. The waters are rising, so am I."

No life can be really appraised until it is finished. It is not running well for a while, but enduring to the end that counts. Not many can be truly profitable to the Lord, but all can be faithful. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," for when a saint dies well he leaves behind the strongest of testimonies. Wesley made his supreme claim when he said, "Our people die well." But he sealed that claim with his own last words, "Best of all, God is with us."

Life is a peninsula. Eternity is a continent. Death is an isthmus that connects the two. How shall we say it in a connection like this? Well, death is the last part of life, even as it is the first part of eternity. And just as it is praiseworthy to live well, it is desirable beyond degree to die well. This is the end of your life, young man, young woman. Make the most of it by making it life's crowning day, eternity's day break, and heaven's portal.