

mechanics are still there. A person still mouths the Shibboleths, goes through the motions, continues his genuflections of religion, but the sense of that which is high and holy has long since vanished. It means that life has lost its common denominator, that the Rosetta Stone by which the hieroglyphics of life are deciphered is no more in man's possession. The slide rule is lost to mathematics; there is no longer πr^2 for the fractions of life. The seas of life are sailed without a compass; the planes are flying blindly with no radar scope.

Look at him—Samson; there he is, a three hundred pound physique lying prostrate. Instead of standing tall with forearm heavenward, now he grovels in the dust bound like a common animal to grind in the grist mills of the Philistines. Now, flat on his back in chains he assumes the position of the dead (that is, horizontal). Like Samson, many a person living today knows exactly what I am speaking about. They know, in their honest moments, that no sense of God or Godliness lives within them.

Like a man who insisted on witnessing the electrocution of a young boy who had been found guilty of murdering an innocent young girl. When asked why he wanted to witness such a pathetic sight, the man replied, "I want to see him burn all the way!" When the agonizing ordeal

was over, the man got up from his chair, turned around in the room, and spat! I think that is something of the reaction of one from whom God has taken all kind of leave.

WHEN GOD LEAVES

What is it like to have God leave you? It is something like the magnificent, colonial mansion which I saw not long ago, a mansion begun by a wealthy capitalist. The man had dreamed of a beautiful old colonial home in a setting of tall pine trees. When the house was framed and roofed, the man died—never to see his dream completed. Ten years later the scaffolding was still around the incomplete mansion. Samson was somewhat like that. He started out with brilliant promise; he wound up in a trough of spiritual decline. They put his eyes out and reduced him to a common slave. Sin will bind you, then it will blind you, then it will grind you—a threefold descent to the grave.

That story closes with one long sigh on Samson's part, a sigh which became a prayer, a prayer that he may take with him in his death more than he had slain in his lifetime. And that he did. Here was blindness of soul compounded by a prayer of revenge.

So Samson died and a fitting epitaph: A man who might have been.

THE POWER OF PAUSE

February 16, 1958

Every living creature needs to cultivate the power of pause. He needs to know when to stop. Trying to keep up the pace and not being able to bear the strain is one of the major symptoms of modern man. One of the early Gospel accounts says of the busy people in Palestine two thousand years ago, "There was much coming and going so that there was not even so much leisure to eat." If that were the case in Palestine (where the mode of travel was on camels or donkeys), how much more true is it today when our pace is measured by jet propulsion?

So, let us look at our pace and see the wisdom of pause and the power that such pause will generate in our lives. Out of honesty I must admit that a diagnosis is

much easier than a demonstration of the cure. Yet, if we do not at least move in the direction of the ideal, we shall never relieve our lives of these destroying tensions. Some visitor from another planet viewing this earth would probably conclude that the purpose of life on earth was a race—a race to catch the next train or subway, the next street bus; a race to work, to play; a race home; a race to church; a race to a cemetery!

JESUS' PRESCRIPTION

Jesus gave us the only excelling prescription by which life is to be lived out on earth in time as well as in eternity. He made it distinctly clear that human life is a unity: it involves the health of mind,

body, and soul. Divide that equation and one remains a segmented, partial self. Though a person have the body of Charles Atlas and the mind of Albert Einstein, if he has a puny soul, he still is far from a healthy personality. Mental health envisages the health of the total man: mind, body, and soul. Here is where Christianity comes in. It would make of man's body a temple, of his mind a factory of resilient ideas, of his soul a throne for God's occupancy.

Who must be convinced that our day is a stranger to those islands of pause, those little fifteen minute vacations which have a way of straightening the furniture of life? Evidence abounds on every hand that we rush headlong without pausing to see either distance covered or the direction taken. The predicament was brought home to me anew today when I stopped at a red light. While glancing down on the front seat of my car to see if I had remembered to bring a certain paper, the light changed. In the split second that it took me to glance down, the person behind me sat down on his horn as though I had gone sound asleep.

But aren't most of us guilty of keying life up to such split-second timing that it becomes a matter of tensive tempers if someone is three seconds late in changing the gears ahead of us? Such is a barometer of our nerve-taut souls: short tempers, long headaches; short commendations, long condemnations; short on days, long on the graves! Trying to keep up the pace without being able to stand the strain: that's the vortex at which we break down—all of us in varying degrees. And while some never show up in a clinic for nervous disorders, millions have denuded life of all its glory and livability.

FAILURE TO PAUSE

Failing to pause results in a distorted interpretation of life. Life gets out of focus. Instead of sometimes telescoping life to get the perspective of the stars, most times life is microscopied—where the tiny, insignificant things are blown up out of shape. The flyspeck issues are mistaken for mountains of worth; cheap, imitation values are auctioned off with the zeal of an evangelist.

Teapot tempests are misread as ocean typhoons.

Then, as we give ourselves to these petty skirmishes of life, the pace is accelerated. At times when the body moves too fast, the mind collapses out of sheer sympathy for the body's fatigue. A well-timed pause is like timing in good music. Breathing at the right time assures clarity of tone and ability to hit the high notes without strain or falsetto. Just so in our daily routines: if we come to the high notes of emotional drain out of breath, it takes no genius to foretell the probable results.

Just here a word needs to be said about those who have never learned to pause in their work—not even on Sunday. The first day of the week is sacred in that it commemorates that day when Jesus rose from the dead. But even if there were no religious significance to any day, still one out of the seven should be set aside to let the soul catch up with the body. The only anthem that is familiar to millions of Americans is the ring of the cash register. The one true sight of beauty to that kind is the dollar mark in the pupils of the eye.

WHAT PAUSE WILL DO

On the positive side of this consideration, turn to look at what pause will do for us constructively. When one takes time to be holy, then his soul will catch up with his body. Many times the soul gets left on the side of the road while the body madly dashes ahead to compete for the foolish conception of security that is being sold to the world today. One would think that the new Jerusalem consisted in that little vine-covered cottage with a swimming pool in the backyard and a portable barbecue pit on the patio. Oh, just to be able to escape the rat race and relax in such a place—then the millennium is bound to come! Hardly! Most people would be miserable if such a set of circumstances were their daily lot. Give your soul a chance to catch up with your body right now. That is, if you still have one, after all the feverish race for this and that.

Let me ask you now: What kind of a soul do you have left inside of you? How big are the muscles of your soul? When was it held up to the scrutiny of divine

approval? How long has it been since you walked to the altar of some Christian church and repented of your wayward living and made peace with God? Too long? Oh, yes, for most of us it has been far too long. Little wonder we are spiritually impoverished and wondering why we are cracking up and breaking down!

When you pause, it will give you time to count your blessings one by one. Until one stops, he never really knows how well off he is. The foolish pace drives him in a mania for more insomuch that he really doesn't know what wealth is his already. Such a wholesome pause will do away with the necessity of counting sheep while trying to go to sleep. He can count his blessings instead.

POWER OF PAUSING

Moreover, when one learns the power of pausing, he will have time to know that all of Christ's commands were not: "Arise and shine." Part of them sound like the consoling voice of a mother to a sick child, "Lie down, my son, and rest." No, God doesn't always say, "Get up and go." Instead, there are times when He leads us beside the still waters into green pastures and makes us lie down. He knows that unless we come apart from the noisy world, we shall come apart inside.

Let it be understood right here that for a Christian (or any other person for that matter) the choice isn't between burning out or rusting out; it is not a choice between complete activity and complete inactivity. Complete activity will burn one out indeed, but complete inactivity would be a worse fate. Wisdom consists in being

able to burn with incandescent zeal at times, then alternately to glow in minimum zeal at other times. Here a sense of timing and proportion becomes not only valuable but also absolutely essential to right living.

Jesus told his early apostles to come out to a desert place. He did not ask them to come to the noisy island or circus centers, nor to the commercial bazaars or their equivalent in His day where human nature has a way of wadding up to excite the baser elements of human nature. There is nothing about the average amusement place where the soul can catch up with the body. As a matter of fact, most people leave their souls back home when they plan a vacation jaunt because a vacation to many is also a vacation from morals and discrete spiritual sensitivity. But in a desert place, (that is, some non-commercialized, quiet retreat where one can hear the symphony of silence), the ragged nerves and jaded dispositions can ooze into a more livable condition. The power of pause is powerful indeed in such environment.

Note that Jesus told them, "Come ye," not "Go ye," which implies a coming to Him. In effect He says, "Come with Me." My, what an invitation—to walk one's weary feet in cadence with Christ, to stop beside the babbling brook and hear Him speak, "Be not dismayed for I am thy God." Oh, friends, the pause that refreshes is not necessarily just a carbonated drink. It is the presence of Almighty God who can invade our lives to bless, guide, sustain, and direct us away from that which would destroy us.

LIFE'S BIGGEST MISTAKES

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Life's biggest mistakes usually are not matters of strategy nor political choices but are personal and interpersonal choices. The choice of the wrong partner for business or for one's home, the decision to take the wrong road: these constitute our major mistakes. Of course, it is easier to speak from hindsight than from foresight; it is equally true that we all make mistakes,

even the best of men. Today it is my purpose in this sermon to point out four of the biggest mistakes any person ever makes. Will you hear them?

USELESS WORRY

One of them is the tendency to worry over things that cannot be changed. Before these are listed, we should be eager to con-