

our midnights of despair and carry us away to a more desirable plateau without effort on our part. Millions regard prayer as such a carpet . . . or faith-healing as a gymic of deliverance . . . some push-button technique that would change things overnight. God didn't do that for Paul.

He did something better: He delivered him in his trouble . . . not from his trouble. Religion is no panacea for all that troubles us and we had better be honest to admit it. While God may not move the load from our back, everytime He will give new strength for the back.

One would think that after all the suffering this apostle had gone through that God would have called a halt to future trials. Not so. Rome was still to come . . . Rome, the center of pagan life . . . and God designed that Paul should represent him there and the final suffering would mean the supreme penalty.

PRESENCE OF GOD

Most of us would have faltered and failed before going through such endless rounds of heartache. What is the explana-

tion for this granite-like endurance? Was the man so physically and mentally equipped that he had the advantage on the rest? Hardly. There is no other valid explanation than the simple, yet profound statement that the Lord was standing by him. Not only standing but re-equipping, undergirding, inspiring, re-enforcing and consoling. God doesn't stand like a zombie . . . His is the ministry of love and grace. Once this truth penetrates the soul of man he can face up to anything.

On every composition of music that Bach composed he had a habit of writing across the top of the score, "Only for the Glory of God." When he finished a work he would sign across the bottom, "By the help of Jesus Christ." Little wonder his music became immortal. "Only for the glory of God . . . by the help of Jesus Christ."

Oh, if in this very hour the millions of you who listen to this broadcast, regardless of what your work may be, would sign your words and deeds with these meaningful words: "Only for the glory of God . . . by the help of Jesus Christ," then the Lord would stand by you even unto the end!

THE UNEXPIRED TERM

August 10, 1958

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

It is a sobering thought that one out of every four persons listening to this broadcast will be dead in ten years. Yet despite that fact everyone has an unexpired term of life . . . be it ten, twenty or more years to live. Everyone of these years should be lived for God. This sermon is a bid that you might yield your unexpired term to God no matter who has claimed the years that have gone before.

Millions of people never make the right beginning in life. Whether it is a horse waiting the sound of the bell for the race, a boxer keyed up for the initial bout, or a personality starting the romance of life—right beginnings are all-important.

It is a tragic picture to witness the rank and file of people who did not get off on the right foot. Purposeless existence actually is a type of atheism in that it says by

actions that life is an endless tread of circles wherein there is nothing specifically for one to do. That type of shoddy thinking leads to a nomad's existence from job to job, habit to habit without ever realizing anything of true value.

LIFE OF A PARASITE

Nature has its own illustration of this kind of life. Certain mosses, mistletoe, some types of vines grow as parasites . . . they depend upon other plants for their life. On trunk, limb or branch they must attach themselves for sustenance. Many human beings become parasites on society either by schemes that pass no board of ethics or by aimless wandering.

In light of all the causes that need championing, all the wrongs that need righting, songs to be sung, diseases to be healed, mountains to be scaled, service to

be rendered . . . one would think that anybody could lose himself in some worthwhile activity.

To the young people listening let me urgently insist that you not waste your early years by purposeless drifting. You will be young only once . . . life is a one-way street and a million aged people just now would easily say, "If I had my time to go over . . ." The striking fact is that they don't and won't ever have their time to go over. Nor will you. So, seize these years of youth and get the right kind of advice from the right sources, then commit your life and make something worthwhile out of it!

FACTORS THAT PREVENT COMMITMENT

There are many factors that prevent commitment. Some of them are of our own making; others are made for us. To many the set of circumstances in which they find themselves block their willingness to be committed to some large, life-lifting work.

It is true that many are born with two strikes against them if one reasons from environment . . . but the real people in history have created their own circumstances. Anyway you reason it we chose our own ruts and habits. One doesn't have to ease into poverty, ignorance, disease or anything else just because he starts out in them. Such conditions have often stimulated those of stronger will to do something about it.

To others the wrong conception of a church stands in the way of their yielding their lives to God. The church is in many ways like a school . . . there are people in it of all degrees of learning, social status, etc. Some are in the first grade as Christians, having just made their commitment to Christ. Others are in high school, learning some of the difficult mathematics of growing a sturdy soul. Then a few have reached the college level where the difficult art of asking, "What would Jesus do?" becomes daily practice.

But few are charitable enough to look at the church this way. In a Pharisaical righteousness they expect saintliness from all who belong to the church. It is true that many members go along for a free

ride, seldom if ever modifying thought or conduct, but these are no final argument against those who are different.

EGO IS BARRIER

A stubborn ego serves as an iron curtain between some folk and a God-like commitment. Being unwilling to surrender out of fear that such would be interpreted as weakness, they stand in adamant refusal. No matter how persuasive the preacher or a lay witness to the truth, some refuse to be convinced.

In our company one summer a few years ago there was a lady who enjoyed the tour through Europe . . . all but in one respect. She continued to say, "Why on earth don't these people drive on the right side of the road." To her the "right" side of course was the side to which she was accustomed back home. She could never get accustomed to the fact that right for her might be one thing while right for another in an opposite place would be something different altogether. The truth of God is held in such jeopardy by those who refuse to see it in its rightful light.

The wrong idea about God is a road-block to many who otherwise would be following God. My, what a variety of notions there is about God! Some see Him as a sadist like the soldier who was wounded in Korea one minute before the cease-fire order and died one hour afterwards who said, "Isn't that just like God."

God is so eternally remote to many that they try to compensate by images, artistry, or some other media that would bring Him closer in. Sooner or later this effort is despoiled and the idea of God is dropped altogether . . . at least any effort at personal communion with Him is dropped.

A GOD TO SEE

The human race has always wanted a god whom they could feel or embrace. Hence, the golden calf in the wilderness of Sinai or the pagan images so near that devout men and women could scrub the dirt and dust off their feet. "Give us a God we can see," is almost an hourly command from multi-millions.

But if God could be seen, felt, weighed . . . He would be no god at all worthy

of human adoration. God is a spirit and that fact prevents our boxing Him in.

It is just as sensible to look for music by tearing open a violin as it is to look for God in a test tube or temple. He is not there . . . to be viewed; He is there to be experienced in the laboratory called a human soul. So, if you are in the number waiting to find such a "realistic" God before you commit yourself to Him, let me urge forsaking that notion even now. You cannot see atoms either . . . yet we know something of their incalculable explosive potential.

NEVER TOO LATE

It is never too late to commit yourself no matter how few coupons you have left in your book of years. God wants the rest of your allegiance even if Satan has received most of the years that have gone before. It is a shame that one serves the devil for sixty years or more then turns

to God as the last move. But better late than never.

There have been many who got a late start but tried to make up for lost time. But let me warn you: it is not easy. As a matter of fact every day you put it off it becomes harder. The rut gets deeper, the mind satisfies itself in a specious security that all is well. This actually is the type of death-sleep induced by Satan to prevent old people from turning to God.

The break through will cost in heart struggles but it can be done. God still moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. One can drink from the springs only by climbing high in the mountain. But my, how it is worth it! Religion is a journey not a destination . . . and he who puts his feet on that path whether at eight or eighty will eventually wind up at the portals of the heavenly city. Why not give God your unexpired term by yielding your heart, your mind, your soul to Him right now?

WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS

August 17, 1958

Beneath the groans of tired, sweaty men with their heavy chains, there arose a monotonous, incessant prayer, "let my people go." God's people were enslaved in Egypt and the Egyptian task masters were severe tyrants. Then a leader, Moses, was found who led the people through the waters of the Red Sea out into the freedom of Sinai's wilderness.

It should have taken the Israelites a few months to make the trip through this desert wilderness to Palestine. Instead, it took them forty years. Why? Why such a lifetime for so short a trip? Instead of progress, they roamed around until they were divided into little groups searching for food and water. Sickness broke out among them; one trial after another came their way until forty years were consumed in aimlessness.

Friends, life today for us can be little more than wandering in a wilderness. The real hazards are not so much geography as they are mental and emotional. It's true that a rough country slows one's

pace, but a rough mind and soul slow it even more. The real blockades are not serpents, jagged rocks and howling nights but the inner pitfalls and the snaretraps of mind and soul. There are many wildernesses and today I point out a few.

THE WILDERNESS OF DOUBT

One is the wilderness of doubt. This all-engulfing Sinai can so blockade life that one can wander around it the rest of his days without ever getting anywhere. Like those early Israelites we begin to ask, "Is Jehovah with us or not?" "Did we leave God down in Egypt or did we bring Him along?" And just remember it hadn't been two months since they had experienced the miraculous deliverance through the waters of the Red Sea!

Is God with us? Haven't you seen those who supposedly gave their hearts to Christ and a few months later doubting the very existence of Christ? Ah, human nature is a strange contradiction especially when it