

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE

INDIFFERENT AND BACKSLIDERS
REMINDED OF OBVIOUS FACT.

MAY QUICKLY WHIRL AROUND

Prayer for Restoration—Powerful Appeal for a Renewal of Spiritual Ties and for a Rekindling of Spiritual Activities—Review of the Years Shows Only Character Remains, All Things Else Change.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1905, by Frederick Dyer, of Toronto, at the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., April 9.—To the indifferent and especially to the backslider who has gone back to the world and its pleasures, this sermon makes a powerful appeal for a renewal of spiritual ties and a rekindling of spiritual activities. The text is Psalm 112, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

Oh, how quickly the wheel of fortune may whirl around! What we are to-day is no earnest of what we may be to-morrow. Rich and affluent, prosperous and happy now, that does not prove that we shall be rich and happy and prosperous, with a multitude of friends hanging around us, next week or next month or next year. The night follows the day as well as the day the night. The people living in the South American republic of Chile reckon history by this or that or the other earthquake, which has made the heaving earth rock down homes and destroy whole cities and towns and villages. Some of us may reckon the passing away of our lives by the epiphany which are chiseled upon the tombstones of our buried hopes.

"Year of 1872." Oh, yes, scores of you have seen better days in your body, your property and your families! But, alas, many of us, like the writer of the words of my text, have seen better days in our spiritual condition. I do not know whether this author held, as do the Methodists of our day, that a good man might lose his hold on salvation, but one thing is sure—he knew that he had fallen from grace. He had once tasted the joys of divine sonship. He had once waded ankle deep, knee deep, waist deep, chin deep, into the great depths of God's love and drank of those living waters. But now he has climbed out of those depths and stands shivering upon the jagged rocks of evil in the cold, biting winds of sin. Thus we find him crying out in words of entreaty: "Oh, God, bring back to me the happiness and the exhilaration and peace of my past gospel life! Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation!"

Have not some of us need to offer the prayer of the psalmist? I know that there are many who are in the position of this psalmist. I know, furthermore, that if you will only return you may taste again the gospel joys, and they will be sweeter to you than they ever were before. An eminent minister of the cross a short time ago told me that the greatest blessing of a revival of religion was not found in introducing sinners to Jesus, but in bringing back to his service those who had once been found at the foot of the cross. "And," said he, "when these wanderers return they make the very best workers in our Christian churches." May God help me to prevail on some of you backsliders again to taste the gospel joys!

But I never did like praying for anything in general and for the universe in particular. In order to be explicit we would divide the psalmist's prayer under three or four distinct headings. In the first place, I would have you make the prayer: "Return unto me, O Lord, the joy which I experienced when I first began to realize the heights and the depths and the lengths and the breadths of thy sacrifices for me. Restore unto me the joy which came to my soul when years ago I first approached the communion table and said, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'" Then the tidal wave of happiness rolled over us in surges. Then we said to ourselves: "Saved by grace! Saved by grace! Oh, God, I thank thee that I have been saved by grace!"

Once our souls were aflame with gratitude for what God had done for us. No sooner were we converted than, like the psalmist, we cried out, "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." But after awhile our joyful enthusiasm began to cool. We grew indifferent. We turned our backs upon God. We now find reading the Bible a bore and praying a drudgery and talking to Christ and waiting for Christ to talk to us a task instead of an endless pleasure. Oh, my friends, do you want to feel again the exhilaration which came over you on the day of your conversion? Then make the prayer of my text. Make it day in and day out. Make it and continue to make it as you rehearse all God has done for you by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Oh, that to-day we could have the thrill which surged through us when we first felt that God had purged us with hyssop until we were clean, that he had washed us until we were whiter than snow!

But gratitude to God for what Christ has done for us is not the only joy of salvation that is buried and needs to be renewed. One of these joys that needs to be resurrected is the one we used to find in Christian service. No sooner were we converted than immediately we went forth to try and save some one else. Then when we brought a brother or sister to the cross there came over us another joy which we had not hitherto conceived, the joy of saving men and women for Christ. There is no joy on earth greater than that. Not even the joy of being saved ourselves and being compared to the joy of knowing that by the grace of God we have been able to save some one else from perishing.

The man of the world who has never experienced this joy cannot understand it. The exhilaration of it is conveyed for him in mystical and unknown tongues. For years and years I could not understand what Paul meant in his letter to the Romans. I felt he did not mean what he said. I believed he was only using an exaggerated oratorical figure of speech when he said, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." The more I studied that passage the more I felt and do feel to-day that Paul literally made this prayer, "Oh, Christ, if there is no way to save my brothers, my sisters, my friends, my people, but by blotting my name out of the book of the living, then destroy me for their sakes!" In other words, Paul said, "Destroy me if by my spiritual death others might spiritually live forever in these and yet is not this joyful willingness to be sacrificed to save others: experienced by the new convert always?"

Oh, apostates, oh, ye negligent and slothful church members, stand idly about in the market places when God's vineyards are filled with the ripest clusters just ready for the plucking, you have known in the past the joy of salvation, the joy of being saved. Why, I can see even now the reflection of a past joy upon your faces as in the time when you used to labor in the Sunday schools and bring little children to Christ. I can see you now smiling as you used to do when you brought your friends to the revival meetings and labored with them to accept Christ. I can see you now going up to your minister and earnestly and rapturously saying: "Pastor, keep on praying. We will get them. They are bound to give their hearts to Christ. We will get them yet." But now the world and the flesh have crept in. You do not work for souls as you used to do. You do not have the old joy of saving souls. Oh, my friends, will you not pray that this joy may come to you again: "Lord, God, give me the old thrill of being saved by thy sacrifice. But do more than this, Lord. Give me the joy of saving some one else for thee. It is necessary in order that others may spiritually live, that I must spiritually die. Then, as Paul wished, let me die for this honor and glory."

But in this psalmist's prayer we would find another joy. It is this: "O God, restore unto me the joy of Christian fellowship with Christians! O God, make me again love church services and the prayer meetings and the missionary gatherings and the convocation of the young people of the Christian Endeavorers and Epworth leagues and the Brotherhood of Andrew and Phillip! O God, may I desire to associate with thy disciples more than to go with any other class of people on earth!" You think this is a strange prayer to make? I do not. When I make it, I know that one of the sweetest signs of the true

Christian life is to be found in the desire of a Christian to be where other Christians are. Yet, if I mistake not, some of you never go to the midweek prayer meetings or to Sunday schools or to our cottage prayer meetings. You look upon these meetings as a bore, a drudgery, a tiresome hour, wasted for duty's sake. When you go to these meetings you do so under protest. "Yes," you answer, "I do look upon these religious gatherings as a bore. But I am not responsible for my likes and dislikes any more than I am to be blamed because my favorite color is blue, my favorite flower a carnation, my favorite musician Beethoven, my favorite novelist Thackeray, my favorite artist Rubens and my favorite poet Longfellow or Tennyson. I like what I like and dislike what I dislike, and I cannot help it. Now, if I dislike to associate with the class of people who make up our distinctively religious gatherings, such as the church, the missionary society, I am not to blame. I am no more to blame than I am because I dislike codfish or mackerel and like apples and grape fruit."

Ah, yes, you are to be blamed. You are individually responsible for your likes and dislikes. If you do not care to associate with Christian people in Christian gatherings then it is high time you learned to enjoy their society, and the quicker the better. Because I do not love them now that is no excuse why I should not learn to love these people. Supposing I was a dyspeptic, supposing I had for years been living on meat and vegetables and ham and pork and cabbage and highly seasoned salads and rich pastries, supposing on account of my dyspepsia I was sent to a sanitarium, what would be the first order of my physicians? "Put that man on the simplest diet." Because I tell my physician I do not like plain toast and milk and cold bread and good, wholesome beefsteaks and potatoes, what would he make any difference? No. My physician would reply: "Then the sooner you learn to like them the better. You have a diseased appetite. You must develop a healthy appetite for good, wholesome, simple foods."

Now, my Christian friend, by the same law you may have a diseased spiritual appetite for spiritual association. If you cannot find enjoyment in communion with Christian people, then the sooner you learn how to enjoy their society the better. You are exactly in the position of the frivolous girl or the dissipated boy growing up in a Christian home. The mother or the father is happy unless they are off at some party or visiting some neighbor or attending some theatre. But after awhile they will find that the sweet, gentle fellowship of the Christian people, the best kind of enjoyment, the best kind of recreation, the best kind of reading of a book by the glowing heart in the sitting-room is one. The loving caress of a mother's or a wife's hand, the mother's or the wife's smile, the little child, the quiet prayer, the sweet memories of long years that are past, are others. The hopes of the years to come, being talked over, offer the highest relief to the mind. The mother or the father do not think that associating with men of the world offers to you the same of pleasure. If you cannot find any enjoyment in the fellowship of Christian people, the sooner you have grace that God will give you a diseased spiritual appetite the better for your own enjoyment and the better for your life.

That you can govern your love for the good and your dislike for the bad or the indifferent was illustrated to me by the experience of a lady member of my church who is a very fine musician. Her brother was a happy go lucky young man who seemed to have no ear for good music. Every popular air, every music hall jingle, every new melody that had a jolly ring to it, he knew by heart. All the latest songs he could sing until the very rafters echoed. But the deeper, sweeter, holier calls of the great musical masters he left unheeded upon his dull ears. This brother, who was a fine athlete, had his leg broken and was brought home from college and had to lie in bed for about six weeks. During those six weeks his sister had to continually practice for a difficult performance which she was about to give before a famous musical society of the city. At first the brother protested. He wanted to hear her play some of the popular airs. But she insisted that she must play the more difficult pieces, and musical masters kept pouring their thoughts into his mind and heart through the vestibule of his ear there was born in his soul a love for the truly great music. The old songs which he once loved he now despises. The truly beautiful music he once despised now he loves. My friends, if you do not love the society of Christian people there is something wrong in your life. You have a diseased spiritual appetite. The sooner you go with the truly consecrated people the sooner you will learn to love their society. Do not make the prayer of my text, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," unless by constant association with Christian people you do all in your power to develop that spiritual joy.

But in order to fully grasp the beauty of the psalmist's prayer you must remember that it is given with the absolute knowledge that in his own strength he was nothing, but that in God's strength he could be everything. David at this time was standing under the shadows of his past sins. God had blessed him again and again, yet just after these many manifestations of the divine love he had fallen back into sin because he had depended upon his own strength. Thus David says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me by thy free spirit." That means in plain English, "Oh, God, bring me back to thy loving grace, cleanse me from sin and then by thy power do not let me again wallow in the quagmires and the bogs and the fith of evil."

It is only by doubting and continuing to distrust our own strength that we are led to rely entirely upon God's protecting power. I would have us feel our dependence on God when we make this prayer exactly as the little saved daughter of a dear friend of mine feels toward her father. Some months ago this little girl was in a foundling institution in one of our large cities. By this institution she was sent west and put into a low Mexican home of ignorance and filth. There my friend found her and said: "She shall not remain here. She shall come and be my daughter and live in my home." He took her west. Then he and his wife washed the little girl and put clean clothes upon her and put her into a clean, white bed. They surrounded

her with all that wealth and love could give. Yet, though that little girl is now only about two and one-half years old, she lives in continual terror of being taken back to her past surroundings. Every night before she goes to bed she calls her foster father to her side or crawls up into his lap and puts her little arms about his neck and says, "Papa, you won't let them come and take baby away, will you?" Sometimes she awakes at night and calls and asks the same question, "You won't let them take baby away, will you?" And the great, strong man, with tears in his eyes, says: "No, baby, no, daughter! I will not let them come and take you away from me and mamma! Go to sleep now; papa will keep you safely by his side!" So David, as a heart-broken sinner, just reaches up and puts his arms up in plea to God and says: "Oh, Father, keep me. Don't let me go back to sin as I have done in the past. Keep me, Lord. Keep me in the power of thy love." Have you not, oh, man, sinned after God has restored to you again and again the joy of salvation? Can you not say to him now: "Keep me, Lord. Keep me, Father. Keep me."

Ah, yes, your friends, because you have again and again come to Christ and tasted of the joy of salvation and then fallen away do not let your broken resolutions keep you away from the Father to-day. First let a clean sheet. Say, "O God, forgive." Then make a prayer, an earnest prayer, which will be a continuous prayer for every morning, noon and night. Let this be your prayer: "O God, keep me. Keep me, O Lord, keep me every step I go!" And God will keep you, brother. He will keep you under the shadow of his wings. Will you make the prayer of my text now? Will you continue to make the earnest prayer, "Uphold me with thy free spirit," until at last he delivers you forever from all sinful temptations at the great white throne of heaven?

Sir Redvers Buller and His Tenant.

One of the bravest of our generals is trustee of the Newton estate near the Village of Newton St. Cyres. On going over the estate on a recent occasion, he came in contact with a tenant who failed to recognize him, and who was full of complaints. On finding out the identity of the general, he requested him to visit his house some little distance away, and his wife would show him some dilapidations that urgently required attention. On reaching the cottage, the general was confronted by the female occupant, who invited him to enter. She showed him over the premises, pointed out the requirements and "waxed" with the visitor. He did not appear to agree to all her wishes. Then she threatened that if she could not get the work done she should go and see "Mr. Buller" about it. Grasping the situation, the general inquired if she would know "Mr. Buller" if she saw him. She declared she should, as she had his likeness hanging up in her house. After considerable discussion it gradually dawned on the woman who her visitor was, and his likeness was really in her house. She was then full of apologies, but the general assured her she had done nothing wrong, and left her to her own reflections, assuring her that the necessary wants should receive attention.

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In Fall Dress. "Oosh all hemlock!" snorted Uncle Silas, backing away from the door. "What is the trouble, sir?" queried the footman. "I thought I was gittin' in th' ballroom, an' I come within one of buttin' right in thar to th' ladies' dressin' room."

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