

LIVE LIFE OVER.

Many People Desire an Opportunity to Do So.

Rev. Dr. Talmage Gives His Views on the Subject and Urges His Hearers to Do the Best They Can During the Remainder of Their Lives.

In the following sermon, those who think they would like another trial of life, in order to rectify the mistakes they have made, are shown that it would be a miserable failure and an undesirable existence. The text is Job 2: 4: "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

That is untrue. The Lord did not say it, but Satan said it to the Lord when the evil one wanted Job still more afflicted. The record is: "So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils." And Satan has been the author of all eruptive disease since then, and he hopes by poisoning the blood, and the diabolical experiment which left Job victim, to prove the falsity of the satanic remark: "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Many a captain who has stood on the bridge of the steamer till his passengers got off and he drowned; many an engineer who has kept his hand on the throttle valve or his foot on the brake, until the most of the train was saved, while he went down to death through the open draw-bridge; many a fireman who plunged into a blazing house to get a sleeping child out, the fireman sacrificing his life in the attempt, and the thousands of martyrs who submitted to fiery stake and knife of massacre and headman's ax and guillotine rather than surrender principle, proving that in many a case my text was not true when it says: "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

But Satan's falsehood was built on a truth. Life is very precious, and, if we would not give up all, there are many things we would surrender rather than surrender it. We see how precious life is from the fact that we do everything to prolong it. Hence all sanitary regulations, all study of hygiene, all fear of draughts, all water-proofs, all doctors, all medicines, all struggle in crisis or accident.

An admiral of the British navy was court-martialed for turning his ship around in time of danger and so damaging the ship. It was proved against him. But when his time came to be heard he said: "Gentlemen, I did turn the ship around, and admit that it was damaged, but do you want to know why I turned it? There was a man on board, and I wanted to save him, and I consider the life of one sailor worth all the vessels of the British navy." No wonder he was vindicated. Life is indeed very precious. Yes, there are those who deem life so precious they would like to repeat it; they would like to try it over again. They would like to go back from 70 to 60, from 60 to 50, from 50 to 40, from 40 to 30, from 30 to 20. I propose for very practical and useful purposes, as will appear before I get through, to discuss the question we have all asked of others, and others have again and again asked us, Would you like to live your life over again?

The fact is that no intelligent and right-feeling man is satisfied with his past life. However successful your life may have been, you are not satisfied with it. What is success? Ask that question of a hundred different men, and they will give a hundred different answers. One man will say, "Success is a million dollars;" another will say, "Success is world-wide publicity;" another will say, "Success is gaining that which you started for." But as it is a free country I give my own definition, and say, "Success is fulfilling the particular mission upon which you were sent, whether to write a constitution, or invent a new style of wheelbarrow, or take care of a sick child." Do what God calls you to do, and you are a success, whether you leave a million dollars at death or are buried at public expense, whether it takes fifteen pages of an encyclopedia to tell the wonderful things you have done, or your name is never printed but once, and that in the death column. But whatever your success has been, you are not satisfied with your life.

We have all made so many mistakes, stumbled into so many blunders, said so many things that ought not to have been said, and done so many things that ought not to have been done, that we can suggest at least 95 per cent. of improvement. Now, would it not be grand if the good Lord would say to you, "You can go back and try it over again. I will, by a word, turn your hair to black, or brown, or golden, and smooth all the wrinkles out of your temple or cheek, and take the bend out of your shoulders, and extirpate the stiffness from the joint, and the rheumatic twinge from the foot, and you shall be 21 years of age, and just what you were when you reached that point before. If the proposition were made I think many thousands would accept it.

That feeling caused the ancient search for what was called the Fountain of Youth, the waters of which, taken, would turn the hair of the octogenarian into the curly locks of a boy, and however old a person who drank at the fountain, he would be young again. The island was said to belong to the group of Bahamas, but lay far out in the ocean. The great Spanish explorer, Juan Ponce de Leon, fellow voyager of Columbus, I have no doubt, felt that if he could discover that fountain of youth he would do as much as his friend had done in discovering America. So he put out in 1512 from Porto Rico and cruised about the Bahamas in search of that fountain. I am glad he did not find it. There is no such fountain. But if there were, and its waters were bottled up and sent abroad at a thousand dollars a bottle, the demand would be greater than the supply; and many a man who has come through a life of uselessness, and perhaps sin, to old age would be shaking up the potent liquid, and if he were directed to take

only a teaspoonful after each meal, would be so anxious to make sure work he would take a tablespoonful, and if directed to take a tablespoonful would take a glassful.

But some of you would have to go back further than to twenty-one years of age to make a fair start, for there are many who manage to get all wrong before that period. Yes, in order to get a fair start, some would have to go back to the father and mother and get them corrected; yea, to the grandfather and grandmother, and have their life corrected, for some of you are suffering from bad hereditary influences which started a hundred years ago. Well, if your grandfather lived his life over again, and you lived your life over again, what a cluttered-up place this world would be—a place filled with miserable attempts at repairs. I begin to think that it is better for each generation to have only one chance, and then for them to pass off and give another generation a chance. Besides that if we were permitted to live life over again, it would be a stale and stupid experience. The zest and spur and enthusiasm of life come from the fact that we have never been along this road before, and everything is new and we are alert for what may appear at the next turn of the road. Suppose you, a man of mid-life or old age, were, with your present feelings and large attainments, put back into the thirties, or the twenties, or in the teens, what a nuisance you would be to others, and what an unhappiness to yourself! Your contemporaries would not want you, and you would not want them. Things that in your previous journey of life stirred your healthful ambition, or gave you pleasurable surprise, or led you into happy interrogation, would only call forth from you a disgusted "Oh, pshaw!" You would be blasé at 30, and a misanthrope at 40, and unendurable at 50. The most insane and stupid thing imaginable would be a second journey of life. It is amusing to hear people say: "I would like to live my life over again, if I could take my present experience and knowledge of things back with me and begin under those improved auspices." Why, what an uninteresting boy you would be with your present attainments in a child's mind. No one would want such a boy around the house—a philosopher at 20, a scientist at 15, an archaeologist at 10, and a domestic nuisance all the time. An oak crowded into an acorn. A Rocky Mountain eagle thrust back into the egg-shell from which it was hatched.

Besides that, if you took life over again you would have to take its deep sadnesses over again. Would you want to try again the griefs and the heartbreaks and the bereavements through which you have gone? What a mercy that we shall never be called to suffer them again! We may have others bad enough, but those old ones never again. Would you want to go through the process of losing your father again, or your companion in life again, or your child again? If life again, or your child again?

Besides all this, do you know, if you could have your wish and live life over again, it would put you so much further from reunion with your friends in Heaven? If you are in the noon of life, or the evening of life, you are not very far from the golden gate at which you are to meet your transported and emparadised loved ones. You are now, let us say, twenty years, or one year off from celestial conjunction. Now, suppose you went back in your earthly life 30 years, or 40 years, or 50 years, what an awful postponement of the time of reunion! It would be as though you were going to San Francisco to a great banquet, and you got to Oakland, four or five miles this side of it, and then came back to Baltimore to get a better start; as though you were going to England to be crowned, and having come in sight of the mountains of Wales, you put back to Sandy Hook in order to make a better voyage. Would you like for many years to adjourn the songs of Heaven, to adjourn the thrones of Heaven, to adjourn the companionship of Heaven, to adjourn the rest of Heaven, to adjourn the presence of Christ in Heaven? No; the wheel of time turns in the right direction, and it is well it turns so fast. Three hundred and sixty-five revolutions in a year and forward, rather than 365 revolutions in a year and backward.

But hear ye! hear ye! while I tell you how you may practically live your life over again and be all the better for it. You may put into the remaining years of your life all you have learned of wisdom in your past life. You may make the coming ten years worth the preceding 50 years. When a man says he would like to live his life over again because he would do so much better, and yet goes right on living as he has lived, do you not see he stultifies himself? He proves that if he could go back he would do almost the same as he has done.

The man who gave one-half of his earthly existence to the world and of the remaining two quarters one to Christian work and the other to rest, would not, I suppose, get a very brilliant reception in Heaven. If there were any dried leaves in Heaven they would be appropriate for his garland; or if there is any throne with broken steps, it would be appropriate for his coronation, or any harp with relaxed string, it would be appropriate for his fingering. My brother, you give nine-tenths of your life to sin and Satan, and then get converted and then rest awhile in sanctified laziness, and then go up to get your heavenly reward, and I warrant it will not take the cashier of the royal banking house a great while to count out to you all your dues.

As I supposed it would be, there are young people on whom this subject has acted with the force of a galvanic battery. Without my saying a word to them, they have soliloquized, saying: "As one cannot live his life over again, and I can make only one trip, I must look out and make no mistakes; I have but one chance, and I must make the most of it." My young friends, I am glad you made this application of the sermon yourself. When a minister, toward the close of

his sermon, says: "Now, a few words by way of application," people begin to look around for their hats and get their arm through one sleeve of their overcoats, and the sermonic application is a failure. I am glad you have made your own application, and that you are resolved, like a Quaker of whom I read years ago, who, in substance, said: "I shall be along this path of life but once, and so I must do all the kindness I can, and all the good I can."

My hearers, the mistakes of youth can never be corrected. Time gone is gone forever. An opportunity passed the thousandth part of a second has by one leap reached the other side of a great eternity. In the autumn when the birds migrate you look up and see the sleek black with wings, and the flocks stretching out into many lines of air, and so to-day I look up and see two large wings in full sweep. They are the wings of the flying year. That is followed by a flock of 365, and they are flying days. Each of the flying days is followed by 24, and they are the flying hours, and each of these is followed by 60, and these are the flying minutes. Where did this great flock start from? Eternity past. Where are they bound? Eternity to come. You might as well go a-gunning for the quails that whistled last year in the meadows, or the robins that last year caroled in the sky, as to try to fetch out and bag one of the past opportunities of your life. Do not say: "I will lounge now and make it up afterward." Young men and boys, you can't make it up. My observation is that those who in youth sowed wild oats to the end of their short lives sowed wild oats, and that those who start sowing Genesee wheat always sow Genesee wheat.

And then the reaper of the harvest is so different. There is grandfather now. He has lived to old age because his habits have been good. His eyesight for this world has got somewhat dim, but his eyesight for Heaven is radiant. His hearing is not so acute as it once was, and he must bend over to hear what his little grandchild says when she asks him what he has brought for her. But he easily catches the music rained from supernatural spheres. Men passing in the streets take off their hats in reverence, and women say: "What a good old man he is." Seventy or eighty years, all for God and for making this world happy. Splendid! Glorious! Magnificent! He will have hard work getting into Heaven, because those whom he helped to get there will fill up and crowd the gates, to tell him how glad they are at his coming, until he says: "Please stand back a little till I pass through and cast my crown at the feet of him whom, having not seen, I love." I do not know what you call that, I call it the harvest of Genesee wheat.

Out yonder is a man very old at 40 years of age, at a time when he ought to be buoyant as the morning. He got bad habits on him very early, and those habits have become worse. He is a man on fire, on fire with alcoholism, on fire with all evil habits, out with the world and the world out with him. Down, and falling deeper. His swollen hands in his threadbare pockets, and his eyes fixed on the ground, he passes through the street, and the quick step of an innocent child or the strong step of a young man or the roll of a prosperous carriage maddens him, and he curses society and he curses God. Fallen sick, with no resources, he is carried to the almshouse. A loathsome spectacle, he lies all day long waiting for dissolution, or in the night rises on his cot and fights apparitions of what he might have been and what he will be. He started life with as good a prospect as any man on the American continent, and there he is a bloated carcass, waiting for the shovels of public charity to put him five feet under. He has only reaped what he sowed. Harvest of wild oats! "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof is death."

Young man, as you cannot live life over again, however you may long to do so, be sure to have your one life right. There is some young man who has gone away from home, perhaps under some little spite or evil persuasion or another, and his parents know not where he is. My sons go home! Do not go to sea! Don't go to-night when you may be tempted to go. Go home! Your father will be glad to see you, and your mother—I need not tell you how she feels. How I would like to make your parents a present of their wayward boy, repentant and in his right mind. I would like to write them a letter, and you carry the letter, saying: "By the blessing of God on my sermon I introduce to you one whom you have never seen before, for he has become a new creature in Christ Jesus." My boy, go home and put your tired head on the bosom that nursed you so tenderly in your childhood years.

A young Scotchman was taken captive in battle by a band of Indians, and he learned their language and adopted their habits. Years passed on, but the old Indian chieftain never forgot that he had in his possession a young man who did not belong to him. Well, one day this tribe of Indians came in sight of the Scotch regiments from whom this young man had been captured, and the old chieftain said: "I lost my son in battle, and I know how a father feels at the loss of a son. Do you think your father is yet alive?" The young man said: "I am the only son of my father, and I hope he is still alive." Then said the Indian chieftain: "Because of the loss of my son this world is a desert. You go free. Return to your countrymen. Revisit your father, that he may rejoice when he sees the sun rise in the morning and the trees blossom in the spring." So I say to you, young man, captive of waywardness and sin: Your father is waiting for you. Your sisters are waiting for you. God is waiting for you. Go home! Go home! Go home!

Earnings in Early Rome. In the early days of Rome the ladies of that city wore such heavy earrings that they made the ears sore, and sometimes tore the lobes. There were doctors whose business was chiefly to heal ears thus injured.

The Cruel Knife!

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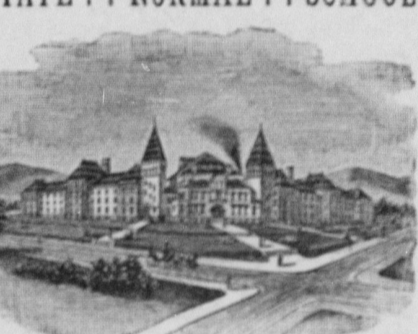


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