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MISTAKES OF YOUTH.



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 diseases since then, and he hopes by poisoning the blood to poison the soul. But the result of the diabolical experiment which left Job victim proved the falsity of the satanic remark, "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 drafts, all water-proofs, all doctors, all medicines, all struggle in crisis or accident.

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 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."

Some of you would have to go back further than to 21 years of age to make a fair start, for there are many who manage to get all wrong before that period, but if you took life over again you would have to take its deep sadness over again. Would you want to try again the griefs, and the heart-breaks, 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.

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In the following sermon Dr. Talmage speaks to those who would live their life a second time if it were possible. The text is, Job 1:4, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Besides that, would you want to risk the temptation of life over again? From the fact that you are here I conclude that, though in many respects your life may have been unfortunate and unaccomplished, you have got on so far tolerably well, if nothing more than tolerable. As for myself, though my life has been far from being as consecrated to God as I would like to have had it, I would not want to try it over again, least next time I would do worse.

You, the good mother of a household, and all your children rising up to call you blessed, can remember when you were quite jealous of the belle of the village, who was so transcendently fair and popular. But while you have these two honorary and queenly names of wife and mother she became a poor wail of the street and went into the blackness of darkness forever. Live life over again? Why, if many of those who are respectable were permitted to experiment, the next journey would be demolition. You get through, as Job says, by the skin of your teeth. Next time you might not get through at all. Satan would say, "I know him now better than I did before and have for 50 years been studying his weaknesses, and I will weave a stronger web of circumstances to catch him next time."

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, 20 years or ten 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.

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 40 or 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 always 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.

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 colloquized, 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 make 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 sermon 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."

Where did this great rock 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 down 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 life sowed wild oats, and that those who start sowing Genesee wheat always sow Genesee wheat.

To others life is a masquerade ball, and as at such entertainments gentlemen and ladies put on the garb of kings and queens or mountebanks or clowns and at the close put off the disguise, so a great many pass their whole life in a mask, taking off the mask at their death. While the masquerade ball of life goes on they trip merrily over the floor, gowned hand is stretched to gemmed hand, gleaming brow bends to gleaming brow. On with the dance! Flush and rustle and laughter of unmeasurable merrymaking. But after awhile the languor of death comes on the limbs and blurs the eyesight. Lights lower. Floor hollow with sepulchral echo. Music saddened into a wail. Lights lower. Now the maskers are only seen in the dim light. Now the fragrance of the flowers is like the sickening odor that comes from garlands that have lain long in the vaults of cemeteries. Lights lower. Mist gathers in the room. Glasses shatter as though quaked by sudden thunder. Sigh caught in the curtain. Scarf drops from the shoulder of beauty a shroud. Lights lower. O'er the slippery boards in dance of death glide jealousies, envies, revenges, lust, despair and death. Stench of lamp wicks almost extinguished. Torn garlands will not half cover the ulcerated feet. Choking lamps, chilliness. Feet still. Hands closed. Voices hushed. Eyes shut. Lights out.

I invite you to quit all that and begin a new life. Roland went into battle, Charlemagne's army had been driven back by the three armies of the Saracens, and Roland almost in despair took up the trumpet and blew three blasts in one of the mountain passes, and under the power of those three blasts the Saracens recoiled and fled in terror. But history says that when he had blown the third blast Roland's trumpet broke. I take this trumpet of the gospel and I blow the first blast, "Whosoever will." I blow the second blast, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." I blow the third blast, "Now is the accepted time." But the trumpet does not break. It was handed down by our fathers to us, and we will hand it down to our children, and after we are dead they may blow the trumpet, telling the world that we have a pardoning God, a loving God, a sympathetic God, and that more to him than the throne on which he sits is the joy of seeing a prodigal putting his thumb on the latch of his father's house. I remember that there were two vessels on the sea and in a storm. It was very, very dark, and the two vessels were going straight for each other, and the captains knew it not. But after awhile the man on the look-out saw the approaching ship, and he shouted, "Hard a-larboard!" and from the other vessel the cry went up, "Hard a-larboard!" and they turned just enough to glance by and passed in safety to their harbors. Some of you are in the storm of temptation and you are driving on and coming toward fearful collisions unless you change your course. "Hard a-larboard!" Turn ye, turn ye, for, "why will ye die, O ye, house of Israel?"

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 of another, and his parents know not where he is. My son, go home! Do not go to sea! Do not go to night where 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 to 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 chiefs 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 regiment from which this young man had been captured, and the old Indian 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 mother is waiting for you. Your sisters are waiting for you. God is waiting for you. Go home! Go home!

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