

The Victory Voice

September 2015

WANTED



These men are suspected of trying to enlist followers for Jesus! They are part of a gang which includes a group of indians. There is rumor that they plan a big job on Sept. 13th at 11:AM at Victory Baptist Church in Piedmont, MO. Be on the lookout! Be warned - they WILL TRY to kidnap you and your loved ones! - P

Inflatables are Coming!



Oct 11 - 11:00 AM

"NEW FRIEND AWARDS" (FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS)



"Get'm while they're HOT!"

Old Fashioned Day - Nov. 8th
11:00 am - "Old-fashioned Chicken Dinner after the service"



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Our text tells us that the captives will be judged according to their works.

Why by their works? Just like there are degrees of reward in Heaven for the saved, there are also degrees of punishment in Hell for the lost. All will be judged by their "works" and by the light they have received but rejected. In Matthew 11 and 23 Jesus used such language as, "two-fold more the child of Hell," "more tolerable" for some at the judgment



Pastor Elmo Parker

THE UNMOCKED GOD

by DR. ELMO PARKER

Gal 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Gal 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

What a price must be paid for sin! You can know the price of sin according to the Word of the Living God and according to the testimony of multiplied human experiences.

God has natural laws which cannot be broken: gravity, centrifugal force, etc. He also has strict spiritual laws that are impossible to defy without sorrow and suffering. The law of Sowing and Reaping as it is set forth in our text is among such laws. Remember, God has not said that we should not break this law, but He has assured us that we cannot break this law! If we would all take seriously the advice of my text, our prosperity and our joy for both time and eternity are assured.

I. WORLD HISTORY IS A HISTORY OF DECEPTION. The first man and woman who lived upon this earth were deceived by the devil. They lost Eden and were driven out of their beautiful home; sent out to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

The devil got them to believe his word rather than God's Word. Such unbelief has been with the human race ever

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since. Frankly, unbelief seems to have grown worse in recent days. The devil has deceived every man that has lived upon this earth. To the degree he has succeeded there have been sorrow, pain, loss, and anguish. The ultimate result has been eternal ruin!

How often has the devil persuaded us that we can do wrong and gain by it? WE KNOW BETTER; and yet we let him, "pull the wool over our eyes!"

The Apostle Peter knew what he was talking about as he warned: "your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Don't be so fooled as to think, "there wasn't any lion around!!"

The Apostle Paul warned us when he wrote that we should, "Put on the whole armor of God" in order to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Our Lord Jesus knew of the need for God to, "deliver us from evil." Was this not how He taught us to pray?

The devil deceives us by persuading us that certain things are NOT WRONG, when we KNOW in our heart and soul that they ARE wrong. He whispers, "There's no harm in it—its alright." Yet we ignore the Word of God and our own conscience and act upon the devil's counsel!

II. **WE CANNOT MOCK GOD.** The foundation of all the devil's deception is the thought that we can mock God, that we can turn up our noses at God, that we can sneer at God, or deceive God! When we think that we can do wrong and get by without God taking notice and acting upon our disobedience—WE ARE MOCKING GOD!

God is a God of infinite holiness and perfect justice. He has declared, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There has never been a single sin, small or great, that did not bring loss to the sinner. You may escape human courts—but you WILL NOT escape God's!!

We cannot hide from God the sin we have already committed. To try to do so is to mock God. God's Word declares, "Be sure, your sin will find you out." Friend, we have the warning from God, "He that covereth his sin SHALL NOT PROSPER!" To attempt to hide our sin is but to try to mock God, and God is NOT mocked!

The Bible is record against those who have attempted to mock the Lord. We read of those who turned up their noses to God, and we also read of the consequences of their action:

1. Pharaoh, when confronted by Moses concerning the Lord's command belligerently said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Well, he found out!!

2. The people of Noah's day ridiculed the man of God obeying the voice of his God, but they found out!

3. The sons-in-law of Lot doubted, but they found out!

4. The Jews of Jeremiah's time mocked God's Word, but they found out!

5. The false prophets and liberal preachers of our day preach a more "pleasant" message, but sadly they, and those they have deceived WILL FIND OUT—YOU CANNOT MOCK GOD AND GET BY WITH IT! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP!"





Looking for Heretics or Making Converts

by Dr. R. B. Ouellette

Michael Kinsley, a liberal news commentator, once said that the difference between liberals and conservatives was that liberals were looking for heretics while conservatives were looking for converts. In other words, the liberals were eager to criticize other liberals for not being liberal

enough, while the conservatives were trying to bring people to their way of thinking and convert them to their philosophy.

The same phenomenon exists in fundamentalism. There are some whose particular delight seems to be in finding fault with another fundamental brother; while others are eager to bring people to a Biblical philosophy and convert them to the right position.

There appears to be a slight difference. Those who are looking for heretics and those who are looking for converts are very similar.

- ☐ Both point out error.
- ☐ Both warn of dangerous trends.
- ☐ Both caution of the consequences of wrong behavior.
- ☐ Both use strong terms to explain their concerns.

There is actually a significant difference. In the Rocky Mountains, there is a place known as the Continental Divide. A person hiking across the Continental Divide would not know when he went from one side to the other if it were not marked by a sign. There is no discernible geographical distinction or boundary. And yet the water which falls on one side of the Continental Divide ultimately ends up in the Pacific Ocean while the water falling on the other side ultimately ends up in the Atlantic Ocean. The difference in where the water lands may be only a few feet. The difference in where it ends up will be thousands of miles. So, too, those looking for heretics and those looking for converts; while seeming to be very close, will end up at a very different place.

The purpose of those looking for heretics is different than those looking for converts. Those looking for heretics look to condemn. Those looking for converts wish to correct. Those looking for heretics wish to criticize. Those looking for converts wish to convince. Those looking for heretics wish to prosecute. Those looking for converts wish to persuade.

The product between the two is significantly different. Those who look for heretics often correctly identify people with the wrong position. They also often drive people away whose positions have not been formed; who are what the book of Proverbs describes as simple ("unpleated" i.e., still able to be influenced). Those looking for converts, while they must be careful that they do not tolerate wrong, can end up bringing sincere people to the

right position rather than driving them away from the truth.

What is our response?

We are commanded to handle heretics but not to hunt for them. (Romans 16:17; II Timothy 2:17, 18; II Thessalonians 3:6) The Bible requires us to deal with those who depart from truth. It does not require us to become heretic-hunters, combing people's files for contradictions, inspecting their bookstores for questionable authors, scrutinizing their sermons for doctrinal deviations and investigating their itineraries for unacceptable associations. There is plenty crossing our paths which we must handle without us looking for additional trouble.

We are commanded to make converts. Obviously, Scripture commands us to win people to Christ (Mark 16:15) It also commands us to bring people to a Biblical position (I Timothy 4:6; Galatians 1:10). The Epistles are clearly written to correct error, convince the churches of the truth and cause them to go a right direction.

Scripturally, the dominant emphasis is clearly on the making of converts. The Bible tells us that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). It is no joy to our God that He must punish evildoers. The Lord Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37) While we may correctly feel anger towards the sin, we must demonstrate anguish toward the sinner. While it is our job to identify that which is wrong, we must inspire everyone we possibly can to do right.

When Dr. Curtis Hutson pastored the Forrest Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, he had occasion to deal with workers who were not living up to the standards which were required of them. As he dealt with



Dear Friends,
We look forward to you be'n here on November the 8th! Ma's fix'n a big chicken dinner with all the trim'mins (Some of the other girls at the church is help'n)! Pa's gonna sing and preach!

I heard that sum of the folks in the hallar are going bring their guitars and fiddles and that there'll be lots of sing'n. Maybe Miss Aggie will bring her accordion an Bro. Andrew will bring his mouth organ!

Now don't you let noth'n keep you away—and bring your kinfok with

you.

Dress up in your best "OLD" dresses girls and you guys grease your hair and your shoes so's you look decent now —you hear?

Love you all, Ma an Pa Parker

P.S. The preach'n and sing'n will start about 11:00 AM. Reckin the eat'n will start about 12:30 or so.

them, he always said, "I am not after your resignation. I am after your consecration."

Some thoughts

It seems to be that all of us are prone to become heretic-hunters instead of makers of converts,. It seems very righteous to take a bold stand against sin and kill a few brothers on the way. One well-known fundamental leader who still takes a strong stand for righteousness and a clear position against wrong, said this of his past behavior: "I would see something move in the bushes, so I would turn and shoot. Then a wounded brother would walk out."

We need to be careful that we are convert-makers and not heretic hunters:

— As we deal with our children. The word "discipline" carries the idea of producing correct behavior, not simply punishing wrong behavior. It is easy for us as parents to become so zealous in pointing out error that we discourage the doing of right.

— As we deal with disgruntled church members. The heart of the shepherd is never to drive away the sheep. Some may leave. Some will be killed by the wolves. And on a rare occasion, for the good of the rest of the flock, some must be removed. Our heart, however, must always be to help correct the problem if that is at all possible.

— As we who are strong deal with a weaker brother. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Galatians 6:1) ■

A Great "Singspiration" is Coming on November 29th! A Time of Singing and Special Music



**FOLLOWED BY
FOOD
AND
FELLOWSHIP**



STARTING AT 6 PM

The Final Judgment of the Unsaved DEAD!

*Written by Dr. Andy Tully—Evangelist and President of
Berean Bible College and Seminary—Piedmont, MO*



Revelation 20:11-15

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The event described by John the Revelator is often called, “The Great White Throne Judgment.” However, I call it, “The Final Judgment of the Unsaved Dead.” The reason being, this is not a judicial judgment to determine innocence or guilt; it is a **sentencing hearing** only. The people judged at this judgment have already been to Hell, and they are taken out of Hell for their final sentencing in the Lake of Fire.

This judgment evidently takes place, not in Heaven, but on earth in the city of Jerusalem. I say that for three reasons: (1) God

never resurrects the unsaved and takes them to Heaven for anything; (2) the text says, “the earth and the heaven fled away,” in that order, indicating earth being the setting; and (3) Jesus has just finished ruling in the Millennium (Revelation 20), and there is nothing in the text that indicates that He goes to Heaven for this judgment. It evidently takes place on earth in Jerusalem.

THE IMPERIAL THRONE

The very first thing that John the Revelator notices is not the massive sea of people. It is not even the presence of the Divine Judge. The very first thing that he mentions is the throne on which the Judge sits. He calls this throne, “a great white throne.” “Great” is from “mega,” meaning, “superlative, massive, immeasurable.” This is a “great throne.”

It is also a “white” throne. The color white in the Bible always indicates three things: glory, purity, and triumph. The One sitting on this throne is glorious, pure, and triumphant. Matthew 25:31 calls this throne, “the throne of his (Christ’s) glory.”

THE IMPARTIAL JUDGE

On the Imperial Throne sits the Impartial Judge. The judge at this judgment is not God the Father or God the Holy Spirit. It is none other than God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 5, “The Father judgeth no

man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

There are five major judgments yet to take place in the prophetic future. There is the Judgment Seat of Christ, which takes place immediately after the Rapture in the heavens (I Corinthians 3:11-14; Revelation 22:12). At this judgment, the Judge is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there is the judgment of the nation of Israel immediately after the Second Advent of Christ to the earth (Matthew 25). At this judgment, the Judge will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Immediately after the judgment of Israel, Gentile nations will be judged (Matthew 25); and at this judgment the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge.

At the end of the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20) Satan and the fallen angels will be judged. At this judgment, Jesus Christ will be the Judge.

And then there will be the Final Judgment of the Unserved Dead, better known as The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). At this judgment, the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge.

May I strongly recommend to you, dear reader, that if you have never bowed and acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Saviour and Lord that you do so now. You will either bow to Him now voluntarily, or you will be forced to then.

IMPENITENT CAPTIVES

Before the impartial Judge stand the impenitent captives. The captives, the judged, at this judgment will be all of the unsaved of all ages. The red, the yellow, the black, and the white will all be there. The Baptist, the Catholic, the Protestant, the Muslim, etc., all will be there. The rich will be there. The poor will be there. The criminal will be there, and the law-abiding citizen will be there. Every man, woman, boy, and girl who ever died unsaved will be there.

Every sinner (Romans 3:10, 23) that has ever lived and died without Jesus Christ will stand at this judgment. The grave will cough up the bodies, and Hell will regurgitate the souls, and then both body and soul will be judged at this judgment.

Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

IRREFUTABLE RECORDS

On the imperial throne sits the impartial Judge. Before the impartial Judge stand the impenitent captives. The impartial Judge then will open the irrefutable records. Our text calls these records, "the books." In these books are recorded the "works" of all unbelievers, along with every opportunity you have had to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, but did not.

God is keeping records. I John 5:7 says that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost "bear record" in Heaven. The Bible often talks about "books" and things being "written down" in Heaven. God is in the business of keeping records; not to remind Him, but to remind us.

Our text tells us that these captives will be judged "according to their works." Why by their works, when salvation is by grace through faith. Here is why: Just like there are degrees of reward in Heaven for the saved, there are also degrees of punishment in Hell for the lost. All will be judged by their "works" and by the light they have received but rejected. In Matthew 11 and 23 Jesus used such language as, "two-fold more the child of Hell," "more tolerable" for some at the judgment than for others. (If I were going to go to Hell, I would not want to go there from twenty-first century America; for this is the most greatly enlightened society the world has ever known.) The Bible teaches here that it will be worse in Hell for some than for others, based on the light they have received and rejected.

(Continued on page 8)

IMPARTIAL WITNESSES

As the impartial Judge sits on the imperial throne reviewing the irrefutable records, He then calls forth the impartial witnesses. These witnesses are not seen in this text; however, we are told in I Thessalonians 4:18 that after the return of Christ for His saints, "so shall we ever be with the Lord." If Jesus is the Judge, then we must be there to for we shall "ever be with the Lord."

I Corinthians 6:2 Paul said, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"

We are not told HOW we will be witnesses at this judgment. It is possible that our presence alone will be testimony enough to condemn the unsaved. It is also very believable that we will be called on to testify of every time we have witnessed to our friends and loved ones, every Gospel tract we have given them, or every prayer we have offered for them. One way or the other, we will be there as witnesses!



Dr. Andy Tully—Evangelist

IRREVERSIBLE SENTENCE

Verses 14 and 15 of our text say, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

There is no recess in Hell. There is no relief in Hell. There is no rest in Hell. There is no revelation in Hell. There is no redemption in Hell.

If you die without Jesus Christ and go to Hell, dear friend, you will be forever beyond the help of the compassionate Christ. You will be forever beyond the preaching about Christ. You will be forever beyond praying to Christ. You will be forever beyond the pardon of Christ.

If you are not 100% sure that you are saved and on your way to Heaven, I plead with you to stop what you are doing and turn in your heart to Him now. Trust what He did for you on the Cross two-thousand years ago. Believe that He arose from the dead. Receive Him now as your Lord and Saviour. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Then contact us at Victory, and we will be glad to answer any questions that you might have, and do our best to help you get started in the Christian life.

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG



"Why should I worship a dead Jew?"

This challenging question was posed in 1932 by a young

Jewish man who had been attending evangelistic services conducted by Alfred Ackley (1887-1960) in California. That question played on Alfred's mind as he prepared his Easter Sunday message. Rising early to prepare for the day, Alfred flipped on the radio as he shaved and was astonished to hear a famous liberal preacher in New York say: "Good morning—it's Easter! You know, folks, it really doesn't make any difference to me if Christ be risen or not.

As far as I'm concerned, His body could be dust in some Palestinian tomb. The main thing is, His truth goes marching on!"

Alfred wanted to fling the radio across the room. "It's a lie!" he exclaimed. His wife rushed into the bathroom, asking, "Why are you shouting so early in the morning?"

"Didn't you hear what the good-for-nothing preacher said?" Alfred replied.

That morning, Ackley preached with great vigor on the reality of Christ's Resurrection, but later that night, he was still thinking about his friend's question and the morning's radio sermon. "Listen here, Alfred Ackley," his wife said at last. 'It's time you did that which you can do best. Why don't you write a song about it and then maybe you'll feel better?"

Alfred went to his study, opened his Bible, and re-read the Resurrection account from Mark's Gospel. A thrill went through him, and he began writing the words to, "He Lives" (Hymn 310). A few minutes later, he was at the piano putting it to music. It has been a favorite of evangelical congregations ever since.

He Lives

Alfred H. Ackley

Alfred H. Ackley

1. I serve a ris-en Sav-iour, He's in the world to-day; I know that He is
 2. In all the world a-round me I see His lov-ing care, And tho' my heart grows
 3. Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing E - ter - nal hal - le-

liv-ing, what-ev-er men may say; I see His hand of mer-cy, I
 wea-ry, I nev-er will de-spair; I know that He is lead-ing thro'
 lu-jahs to Je-sus Christ the King! The Hope of all who seek Him, the

hear His voice of cheer, And just the time I need Him He's al-ways near.
 all the storm-y blast, The day of His ap-pear-ing will come at last.
 Help of all who find, None oth-er is so lov-ing, so good and kind.

REFRAIN

He lives, He lives, Christ Je-sus lives to-day! He walks with me and
 He lives, He lives,

talks with me a-long life's nar-row way. He lives, He lives, sal-
 He lives, He lives,

va-tion to im-part! You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

From Fear to Faith

A testimony written by Bro. Rob Watson



As a little boy I feared the roaring tornado that sounded like a freight train when it nearly tore the tin roof off our old house. I feared the flames that swept across the fields, especially when they began burning the trees in our back yard. I feared the "Sand Man" my cousins told me would get me if I got out from under those bed covers. (But wished I had stayed in the bed when I saw them playing with a Ouija board, watched the table rise, and I heard voices that were not theirs.)

I feared going out to the screened porch at night. Dad had built a seat with a bucket so we wouldn't have to go the path to the out-house. I feared when

Daddy and Mother left the house at the same time, for I knew I'd be facing a fight with my older brother. I was afraid when I heard the loud weeping and wailing of uncles and aunts when my grandmother (Mama) died of a heart attack and her body lay in that box in her house. So, I feared death. I began to fear life when I heard my gentle giant granddaddy crying after he got cancer. He lived next door. He went from six foot three and

260 pounds down to 135 pounds before he died. I sometimes feared sleep because of bad dreams, but I feared staying awake because I heard all kinds of noises. I feared go-

ing outside by myself after one morning I was suddenly surrounded by a pack of large dogs. I feared snakes, spiders, wasps, bees, and all sorts of night animals.

My pastor and his wife practically begged me to go to summer church camp. I put them off for three years. Why? You guessed it. Yes, I had never really been away from home for long, and I was afraid of what that would be like, being as timid as I was, and all those people there, and....

Well, I mustered up enough courage to go. I heard

preaching every day, and every night around the campfire. The preacher said that Jesus loved me, died for my sin, was buried, rose again, went to Heaven, was coming again, and it could be tonight! Then he asked, "and are you ready?" I believe a trio of young men with guitars, sang the same song each night. "The Savior is waiting to enter your heart, Why won't you let Him come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart.



What is your answer to Him? Time after time He has waited before and now He is waiting again, to see if you're willing to open the door, Oh, won't you let Him come in."

A camp counselor took me down away from the cabins, and while looking up at the starry sky, we sat on the ground and talked about God's creation. He talked about why we were here on this earth and he told me about Jesus and what He did for me. I went back to my cabin and after "a scorpion" in my bed convinced me tonight was the night, I received Jesus Christ. Oh the peace that flooded my heart and soul is beyond human explanation! I was a changed boy. My perspective was altogether different with Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I still have a "holy respect" for all of God's creatures, but God has been taking away my fears. Please look at these verses and see how God can take our fears away and replace them with faith in Jesus.

Joh 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. (My life's verse.)

2Ti 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Mat 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

What a Savior! The One Who walked on the raging sea said: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

By God's grace and mercy, He has used us in music, preaching, and teaching ministries through these past 43 years I've been saved. The Lord has also allowed us almost 26 years of work in helping to get better care for the frail elderly, developmentally disabled, and mentally ill people. I am also a certified Life Safety Code Specialist, responsible for environment safety, fire prevention, and emergency preparedness. I always think of these folks I oversee as my own grandparents, parents and brothers and sisters. The Lord always knows what He is doing. (All glory to Jesus!)

We have been blessed to be a part of Victory Baptist for over 10 years now and thank God for leading us to such a good church! I've been especially blessed by the preaching and teaching of Pastor Parker, Dr. Tully, and Brother Miller. May the Lord bless all of our church family. We love you all and only desire to encourage each and every one of you in the Lord.

As to our fears: the Word of God declares:

Php 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Php 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Not the "Righteous!"

ADAPTED FROM PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION'S RADIO SERIES,

"UNSHACKLED!" - WRITTEN BY JACK ODELL

"STEAMBOAT 'ROUND THE BEND!"

Three quarters of a century ago those were magic words, and barefoot country kids came running to see the big sternwheelers. Dick Ramey was only ten when he lost his heart to the Ohio River and the wood burning packets.

His people were "Kentucky Hoosiers," scratching a poor existence out of a small farm on the Indiana shore. The life was hard, and Dick lived for the day he could be a river man. A strong boy was needed to help out on the farm, but when he was twelve, in spite of his mother's pleading and his father's bad health, he ran away.

In those days boys went to work early. Dick was big for his age and had no trouble finding a job aboard a steamer. He found the gypsy life to his liking. Lying on the lower deck with the white water foaming close beside him and the green bank sliding past, Dick came close to complete contentment. With a new scene around every bend, it was easy to forget the neglected responsibilities at home.

Restlessness returned when the hawsers were out at a landing. Then he went ashore with the older men and learned new ways to deaden an uneasy conscience. By the time he was fifteen, Dick was a hard drinker and a habitual gambler.

When winter closed the river, he drifted home. But each spring the first distant hoot of a steam whistle pulled him back to the Ohio.

The winter Dick began calling on one of the neighborhood girls his mother had hope she might persuade him to settle down, and as his interest in Mary Ransom grew warmer she opened a full scale campaign to keep him on the land.

"Dick," she began, "when are you gonna marry and settle down?" "When I want to. If I ever want to."

"You been seein' a lot of Mary Ransom lately. You think she's a mighty purty girl, don't you, son?"

"Maybe I do, and maybe I don't. Anyway, it ain't none of your business."

"It is now, son. Mary made it my business. She come to see me last week." "Yeah?" Dick shuffled restlessly.

"Yes, she did. She wants me to tell you that she'll marry 'you . . . if you'll settle down to farmin' and quit the river."

"What farm? This one?"

"No, son. One her Pa just deeded to her. Mary and the farm are yours for the askin'." "And what if I'm not interested?"

"Then I'd say you're a mighty foolish boy."

When the winter broke, the question was still undecided.

Dick went back to the river. He knew he wanted Mary. They'd become very close that year. But he wanted his freedom, too. He was a drifter by nature and he wanted to keep on drifting.

All that summer he struggled with his indecision. The problem followed him up and down the Ohio and in and out of dozens of waterfront saloons and gambling houses. When ice in the river sent him home again, the choice was still to be made. Long before the next spring came around, Dick knew he wanted the girl most of all. Still he tried to work out an impossible compromise. He made one big effort to persuade her.

"Mary, I want you on the river with me."

"What?"

"Sure, we could get a houseboat and . . ."

"No, Dick!"

"You'd love it out there on the river, Mary - with me . . ."

"I know I would. It's not the river. It's the life that goes with it - the drinkin' and the gamblin'. I'd lose you in no time."

Dick was loaded with good intentions.

"I'd give all that up, honey. I promise I would." "No use to promise, Dick. It just wouldn't work."

Dick was a gambler, but Mary was a better one - as women usually are. She staked everything on an ultimatum.

"Dick, it has to be the farm - or nothin'."

It was choose or lose, and Dick Ramey chose.



THE "GOSPEL WAGON"

That spring he couldn't hear the whistles for the wedding bells. Dick made an honest effort to make good as a farmer, but his heart was never really in the dull and tiring routine. When the old restlessness came back, he began slipping off to town on Saturdays. As time went by the weekends lengthened. He often stayed away until Monday or Tuesday.

The neglected farm ran down and the income dwindled.

Dick talked Mary into a mortgage and tried to pyramid his cash at the gambling tables. It's a gambler's axiom that frightened money never wins. Dick was no exception. He lost at the tables even faster than he had at farming. In time he piled up a gambling debt he couldn't meet.

The crisis came on his thirtieth birthday. Professional gamblers have unique and terrifying methods of collecting delinquent accounts. They gave him just twenty-four hours to pay up and backed their demand with serious threats.

It was a tight spot, but Dick had a plan. It called for his wife's help, and though she knew it was wrong, Mary at last agreed to use her influence. The problem was persuading Dick's father to mortgage the old family farm for enough to cover the debt. Where Dick might fail, an appeal from Mary was certain to succeed. As he harnessed the team for the drive to his parents' place, he felt his troubles were at an end. When Mary wished him a happy birthday, he laughed and kissed her.

Everything was going to be fine, and he had a quart bottle hidden under the wagon seat.

Dick's father was standing near the gate to meet them. As they drew near he raised his hand in greeting. Then, as, they waved back, the old man stiffened in sudden agony and fell to the ground.

He was unconscious when Dick carried him into the house.

Driving to notify the doctor, Dick tried to steady himself with the bottle. His plans for paying off the gamblers were tottering.

The outlook became worse when the doctor completed his examination and gave an opinion. "I don't believe he can live more than a few days," Dick's problem overrode his grief.

"Doc - do you s'pose he could - uh, sign a paper in the shape he's in?" "Sign a paper? Dick, the man's unconscious. He's dying!"

"Yeah, I know, Doc. But won't he . . .?"

"Regain consciousness?"

"Yeah."

"I doubt it. He'll likely hang on for a few days, but I expect him to remain unconscious."

The doctor drove off. Mary went home alone to care for the stock. When Dick's mother went to bed, he was left alone with his dying father, his bottle, and his problem.

Without the old man's signature there could be no mortgage. But the gambling debt stood. Dick was dealing with ruthless men who demanded a sure thing.

Life insurance is a sure thing, and the elder Ramey had life insurance. But it takes a corpse to make it sure.

The old man's shallow, tired breathing went on and on.

Dick listened and drank and watched the clock. He recalled stories of drawn-out illnesses, of dying men who clung to life when hope was gone.

He shuddered at his own imaginings and drank deep from the bottle. The pale corn-likker burned its way down and he stopped shaking. The evil ideas stayed with him.

"One day - two days - three days - a week. What's the difference? He's dead right now, and too stubborn to stop breathing."

Ramey stood slowly and lurched to the bed. He leaned over. The closed eyes and parted blue lips fascinated him. He reached out and placed his hands lightly, experimentally around the dry, scrawny neck. Was his problem really this simple? All he needed was a moment's resolution.

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The blood pounded in his head. He drew a sharp, spasmodic breath.

The eyes of the dying man fluttered open. "Dick . . ."

Ramey pulled his hands away. The faint, whispering voice spoke again.

"GOD forgive you, son." A pause - and again . . . "GOD forgive you!" The faded eyes closed. Dick Ramey turned away and tilted the bottle until every drop had run down his throat. Then he slumped back into his chair. The tired breathing went on and on.

The end came quietly a few hours later. Whatever lay on Dick's conscience, his hands were unbloodied. He had an insurance policy and a corpse. The gamblers were willing to wait for their sure thing.

At the funeral, Dick was unable to look into the casket.

Nor could he meet his mother's eyes. Neighbors took his haggard look for a sign of mourning, but the thing that gnawed at him was far worse. He lived every hour with the knowledge of how near he had come to murdering his own father.

In the months that followed, familiar surroundings were unbearable. Ramey's restlessness and his drinking increased. At last Mary agreed to sell the farm and move to Chicago.

It takes more than distance to escape a nagging conscience. For more than six years he never laughed, almost never smiled. He relied more and more on liquor to blur his memory of the dying man's accusing eyes. There is an ounce of remorse at the bottom of every bottle, and Dick's mornings were times of horror. The only escape he knew was in more whiskey.

He concealed the story of the deathbed, but Mary knew some secret torture was destroying their lives. Each day was just a little worse than the one before.

Undernourished and living in foul surroundings, Mary developed tuberculosis. This added weight to Dick's burden of guilt.

The accusing visions stayed with him even when he was drunk. He sat for hours at a time,

muttering and crying to himself.

There was still another blow. Mary saved her discovery until Dick was sober, but he was on the shaking edge of delirium tremens when she broke the news.

"Dick, a terrible thing's goin' to happen."

"What are you gettin' at?" He glared at her from the fear-ridden depths of his hangover. "We're goin' to have a baby!"

This was disaster heaped on ruin. During the months that followed, Mary was too weak to leave her bed. Dick had been drinking to escape the memory of one sickbed. Now he was trapped in a room with another one. The association of ideas was so vivid he could barely force himself to walk near the bed.

As he sat in the room night after night, stupefied by liquor, the voice of a memory whispered endlessly in his brain.

"GOD forgive you, son. GOD forgive you."

Dick began talking back to the voice, denying his guilt.

Mary heard that one-sided, disjointed argument and learned what haunted her husband.

When he was able to listen, she tried to reason with him. "Dick - you didn't kill your father, did you?"

"No!"

"Well, then . . .?"

The thing at last was in the open and Ramey could talk about it. He thought it over, and then asked, "Mary, what does the Bible say about - killing?"

She got out the worn old Book - and found the twentieth chapter of the Book of Exodus. Dick took it and read, "Thou shalt not kill."

So far so good. Then Mary was struck with a sudden thought. "Dick, did you want to kill him?"

Guiltily, he muttered, "What difference does that make?"

She turned to the Gospel according to Matthew and pointed to the twenty-first verse of the fifth chapter.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say

unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . . "

Dick flung the Bible to the floor and stormed out of the house.

After that, he was never completely sober. Time after time he resolved to save money for the baby's birth, but what little there was always went for liquor.

When Mary's time came, Dick faced the ordeal of attending her himself. He went out and fortified himself with whiskey, and when he staggered home the baby had already arrived. It was still alive, but Mary was dead. In Dick Ramey's brain, the whisper of his father's voice went on and on, mingled with the infant's crying.

"GOD forgive you, son. GOD forgive you."

Next day, the neighbors did what little they could to help. When the child died, soon after, it was buried beside Mary in Potter's Field. Broken by guilt, loathing himself, Dick Ramey shuffled the streets for weeks in a nightmare of self-accusation. When the alcoholic fog lifted a little, only one thing made sense. He might better be dead. By the same reasoning he had once applied to his stricken father, he was already dead but merely breathing. Why prolong the matter further?

He stumbled back toward his room, planning to make death official with a piece of jagged bottle glass. As he went, he was aware of a vague and distant sound of chanting. The words were unintelligible to him, but it seemed to be a number of voices speaking together in chorus. He turned to see where it came from.

Down the street was coming the gospel wagon of the Pacific Garden Mission. As it rattled over the rough paving bricks, he saw it was filled with people. They were saying together the promise of JESUS, and as the wagon rolled nearer he could distinguish the words.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Everlasting life - for a man who counted himself already dead.

There was no belief in Dick Ramey, but a fear of the finality of the grave made him pause and listen. When the wagon had passed him, he followed it slowly down the sidewalk.

At the door of the Mission he hesitated. There was a little printed sticker pasted on the glass. It read, "GOD Loves You."

Dick figured that wasn't true, but he went on inside. On the Mission wall he read the same words he'd heard on the street. "For God so loved the world . . . "

Back of the rostrum big block letters stated, "GOD Is Love."

Dick wanted to laugh at that, but he felt too much like crying. A little sweet-faced woman came up to him and said, "GOD loves you, my friend."

He looked up at a picture of CHRIST, then raised his fist and shook it wildly. There in the Mission chapel he began to shout.

"All right - if you love me, prove it! If you're so all-powerful and full of love, see what you can do about saving me! If you're so full of forgiveness, forgive me! I've got a load of sin that would bust your back! Go on - do it!"

He was sobbing when they led him into the old prayer room.

The transformation of Dick Ramey was sound, lasting and unmistakable. With his life surrendered to the Living Person of the risen Saviour, Dick knew in the very center of his being that he really was forgiven. He knew the load of sin that had broken him would not break his new Lord, because it had been carried to Calvary nineteen centuries earlier.

They found Dick a job as one of the guards in Chicago's famous Art Institute. He stayed there for many years, and much of his free time was spent working with troubled men at Pacific Garden Mission.

One famous preacher, visiting the Mission, was told about the old riverman and insisted on meeting him at once. He called on Dick at the Art Institute. While they strolled through the galleries together, Dick quietly told his story.

Speaking of that meeting later, the preacher said; "There we were, surrounded by the world's great masterpieces. But the most wonderful of all was that plain, quiet man in the dark blue uniform - because a masterpiece is simply, the work of the Master."





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