

Whatsoever He Shall Doeth Shall Prosper II

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This is to be the second of two messages given from the first Psalm. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Now, verse three about the tree beside the water bringing forth fruit in season. The leaf never fading, and everything the man doing, succeeding.

I talked about that last week and said that it was the will of God that His people should always succeed as Christians; and then I suggested that we weren't all successes. And I was not accusing anybody, but I was only pointing out that in the light of what we could be as children of God, what we are is a pretty disheartening thing.

Now we ought to face up to it, and ask ourselves why we're not, and then see if we can do something about it. We may not have too long to do anything about it, when we consider the years that we have spent avoiding God's eyes. When God tried to get our eyes, we looked everywhere but back into His eyes again; changing the subject when He tried to bring it up; putting off when he tried to get us to see. We've done this, and some of us have done it a long, long time. And some have done it so long that you have formed a habit of so doing, a habit that I wonder if you can ever break for the rest of your life.

Now, it is better a thousand times, to face up to a question than it is to pretend and to comfort ourselves. I never want to be comforted in wrongdoing. Neither do I want anybody to comfort me in failure. It is encouraging, of course, to have someone come to you and say that they have enjoyed what you've done and that they feel the Lord has blessed you in your doing. That's all right. And as long as we are made the way we are, we'll be like that, I'm sure. We'll do it and it's all right. I have no objection. I only say that if all the reward I get is the hand clasp of somebody who complements me, it's going to be a very disappointing thing indeed.

And on the other hand, if in the Great Day, we find the Lord has been trying to get our eyes; that He has been trying to get us talking and thinking on a certain subject and we have refused, and put it off and changed the subject, and have not faced up to our spiritual failures, I'm afraid the little handshake and compliment we get down here isn't going to be a very great reward in that terrible day. Better a thousand times to plead guilty before the fact and seek God's face and correct our lives and conform to the Word, and where we've been failing, begin to succeed.

Now, if we're not spiritual successes, we are in that degree out of the will of God, because it's the will of God that we should be. And there are four principles laid down here, four things said about the successful man. Four things that make him successful, four things the Christian does that make him a

successful Christian. And of course, it's only reasonable and logical that if he is not a successful Christian, he must have flouted these rules of success. He must have violated these laws of success. Now here they are. The successful man walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. He sits not in the seat of the scornful. He stands not in the way of the sinner. But he takes his secret delight in the law of God and feasts in that law, day and night.

Now, there are only four things there. Let's look at them. The successful Christian walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. There is room for at least ten lectures, ten sermons on the counsel of the ungodly. So, this is the hour of the ungodly. I think it is one of the most discouraging thoughts that the mind can entertain, that the modern wave of religion without Christ and religion without repentance, religion without penitence, religion without the new birth, religion without the blood, has so stamped itself upon the thinking of the modern American public as to completely overshadowed such churches as ours, and such teaching as ours and such teaching as the Bible gives. The counsel of the non-godly in religion has come in like an ocean and swept away a pond and covered it up.

And if we could consider our Bible teaching, simply a little pond full of the water of life. But the great, salty, brackish ocean of ungodly teaching has come in and swallowed us up until we hardly know where we are. Everywhere it is the same, religion, religion without God, religion without Christ, religion without purity, religion without repentance, religion without the cross, the counsel of the ungodly. Millions of dollars are behind it. Millions of dollars are behind it, putting forth the counsel of the ungodly as the very counsel of righteousness.

But the Christian man has eyes to see and ears to hear and a sharp nose to smell out that which is good, and that which is putrefied, and he pays no attention to the counsel of the ungodly. And if he is not succeeding, if the Christian is not a successful Christian, then it can only be because he is, in some measure, walking in the counsel of the ungodly. He is following ungodly advice. He is valuing what the world values and under-valuing that which Jesus our Lord valued.

Jesus, our Lord told us plainly that there were certain things which were very precious to God but were hated by the world and certain things which were abomination to God but were loved by the world. The values, the sense and scale of values of God and man are opposite to each other. And therefore, a Christian who is not succeeding in his Christian life must conclude, if he wants to be honest, that he is walking in the counsel of the ungodly. That he is listening to the advice, even religious advice it may be, even very purring, soft advice. The advice of the soft voice, non-godly religionist, to say nothing of the world. He's listening to that advice and allowing himself to be affected by it.

I repeat, my brethren, a Christian must be as upright as the palm, and he must be as unbending as a steel beam. And the edges of his life must be sharp. And there must be a clear delineation between right and wrong. And he must stand out there, even though it is to be a target for rotten eggs and rotten tomatoes. He must stand.

I'm in the process of reading for the second time, a book by Chesterton. He's writing on Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi, and he's quite a writer. He was of course a great secular, worldly

writer, but he was also something of a Christian. And I read him mainly for his style, a brilliant, incisive style. Well, he has a remarkably penetrating mind and an ability to analyze situations.

And here is what Chesterton said about Aquinas in his day and St. Francis in his. He said they changed the moral climate of their days by virtue of the fact that they were in violent contrast to their day. And he said, it is one of the ironies of history, that every generation, if it's converted, is converted by those who most violently disagree with it. And he's perfectly right. There never was anybody that lived in the world that was in more radical disagreement with His times than Jesus Christ our Lord. And the church in its early time was in violent disagreement with the world, so violent that the clash meant bloody death for millions of Christians in the first 300 years of Christian history.

But the ungodly counsel, however they may quote Scripture, and however they may coo and purr and massage your back and make you feel good and smile. It's the counsel of similarity. It is the counsel of agreement. It is the counsel of getting along with folks. It is the counsel of tolerance. It is the counsel of being like people and finding a common ground of agreement. The idea of violent disagreement never occurs to the modern Christian scarcely. But even a man, a worldly man like Chesterton could say that the reason Aquinas and St. Francis moved their generation was because they were in violent disagreement with their generation. And the reason Jesus moved his generation, among other things, was that he stood for something utterly unlike and other than they stood for. And though He died, His principles triumph.

Well, you're maybe not succeeding, because unknown to you, you're being brainwashed. You're not seeing the way God sees nor thinking the way God thinks. You are up to a certain measure thinking along with God, doctrinally, but in your inner life, maybe you've been brainwashed by the counsel of the ungodly. Maybe the world has got to you. Maybe it has affected you by its palm-licking, ingratiating approach and rather than have any fuss, you go along with it. Rather than disagree, you agree. Rather than feel the needles of the cross, you allow them to give you a beautiful, painted cross with no nails in it. I don't say it's true, but I say that it's true of those who are in any given instance. I don't say it's true, but I say it's true of everybody that's not profiting and not bearing fruit in season and not succeeding in the Christian life.

Then, the successful Christian sits not in the seat of the scornful. That means, of course, that he's a reverent man, a basically a reverent, sincere man. The sneer is out of his life. If he's not succeeding, then it must be that he's doubting, that he's slighting. He's holding lightly some sacred thing, that he is scorning some holy things, some holy thought. That he is allowing himself to go along with the scornful, with those who curl their lip at holy things and smile condescendingly on the things of God.

No, my brethren, if God Almighty will help me, I will never smile at an off colored joke nor laugh at any joke involving the Scripture nor allow anybody to get away with any conversation in my presence that speaks lightly of Jesus Christ our Lord or the Bible or of holy things. And if it means that I get in trouble, then I must get in trouble. If they hated my Master, would they not hate His servants? And if they rejected the Master, would they not reject those who work for the Master? And I would consider it a great honor to be rejected by those who reject the Master.

A man wrote me a letter this week from out on the West Coast. And he said, I saw the other day where you had been taken apart by a certain fellow. And he said, I was taken apart by him some years back. He attacked me in print as he has you. And he said, he put me down with Charles Fuller and the editor of the Sunday School times and rejected us forthright. He said I felt rather honored to be in such good company, the company of Charles Fuller and the editor of the Sunday School times. Now I'm in it and he's in it. That makes us four and we hope no more. But we are the rejectees of this brother who can write well.

My friend, if he rejects me for the parts that you see in me that you don't like, I'm sorry. But if he rejects me because of my stand for Christ, I'm glad. God forbid, as the great poet Meyer said, God forbid that I should be guilty of the treason of seeking an honor that they gave not Thee. I have never had anything but sheer contempt for the American traveling abroad who will turn on his own country in order to make himself at home and ingratiate himself with, say, people in England or somewhere, will turn and speak against his own country. I say that's a contemptible man, who in the foreign land will speak against his own land for the sake of getting along. No sir, better to be chased out and deported and sent home and come back an American. Better be abused for Christ's sake and because you're a Christian. Sit not in the seat of the scornful.

And he stands not in the sinner's way. It's odd. This is an ambiguous sentence as beautiful as it is in English, and as standard and classic as it has become. It is still an ambiguous sentence. He standeth not in the way of sinners. And I have found numbers of people who misunderstand that passage. They think it means they get in the sinner's way. They interpreted to mean that this Christian is one who does not cause the other worldly man to blunder, cause him to stumble. That's not what it means at all. It means standing in the sinner's way means standing the way sinners stand. And standing in a sinful way, the way that is sinful. This Christian who is failing is found; he is allowing something that he ought to be disallowing. He's excusing something that he ought to be condemning. He's doing something that he ought not to be doing, or he is neglecting something that he ought to be doing.

Now, that's what it says here, and I'm not adding anything. I'm only saying that if three and two make five, two and three, make five too. And I'm only saying, that if the successful man walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, and the man is not successful, he must be walking in the counsel of the ungodly. If the successful Christian sits not in the seat of the scornful, and some Christian is not succeeding, he must be sitting in the seat of the scornful, at least sometimes. If the successful Christian stands not in the way of sinners, and a man is not successful, he must be standing in the way of sinners.

And there's the fourth proposition with which we'll bring it to a close. And in the law does he meditate day and night. His delight is in the law of the Lord. Now, I have a number of questions to ask. Do you read your Bible? Second, do you delight to read your Bible? Do you relish it? Do you know, Christian people can get religious habits and do things that they don't have much relish for at all.

You don't like to wash on Monday or Tuesday, do you sister? You don't like to do it. You don't like to wash your car. Do you sir? You don't like to do it but you have it to do. There are other things you don't like to do. You don't like to make a trip to the dentist every so often. And if you're on a diet you don't like

to keep to that diet. But you do it because you think it's worthwhile. There are some children that don't like to go to school. After the first three days, I never saw one yet that wanted to go to school. The first three days they're eager about it and then after that it tapers off and they can hardly wait till the last day. But there are some things you do because you have to do it.

But the Scripture here does not say that the successful man reads the Bible because he knows he should. It says he delights to read the Bible. In His law doth he meditate day and night. And his delight is in the law of the Lord. My brother and sister, in the long pull, you're going to be what you delight in. In the long pull, you're going to be what you delight in. And if you delight in the Word of God, then you're going to be conformed to the Word of God. If you delight in prayer, you're going to be conformed by prayer and transformed. But if you do it because you have to, it's simply homework.

I had a long conversation with a Catholic priest one time on the train, a very lovely man. And we talked at great length. He finally admitted I was a Christian. He said I was. But I had interrupted him, and I saw a little book he had there and I said, well, Father, excuse me, I suppose I've interrupted your homework. And he laughed and said, no, no, it's perfectly all right. I'll catch up. So, I went away, and he got to reading. He may enjoy that, and I hope he does. But I'm afraid an awful lot of that is just homework. It's just something they're doing because they have to do.

And you can go to church regularly. You can read your Bible. You can even have family prayer. You can give your tithe and still not be a successful Christian, because the successful Christian delights to do these things. He doesn't do them because he knows he must. He does them because there's a delight in.

Well, there we have it now. And my dear friends, as I said, before, we can bring the sun up if we will. We're Christians. Were alive, like the man, Lazarus, who was in the grave, dead and all wrapped up. You know how they wrapped him like an old-fashioned army puttee, wrapped from the knee down, round and round and round and round, bandaged. And they buried them that way.

And Jesus said, Lazarus come forth, and he, showing sheer willpower, came forth. And I still don't know how he got out of there, because he was wrapped from head to feet. But he got out of there and stood up, a funny looking fellow with nothing but his face showing. He was alive all right, but he was all wrapped up. What could he do? He couldn't travel. He couldn't play an instrument. He couldn't feed himself. He couldn't help anybody up to their feet. He couldn't work. He couldn't move. He was wrapped with grave clothes, brown, grave clothes.

And Jesus said, loose him and let him go and then began this swift, excited unwrapping of that fellow, starting at the bottom and then he got his feet loose, and he could kick his feet. And then he got up and he could wiggle his hands and then pretty soon he could raise his arms. Pretty soon, he threw the whole thing off. He was a free man now. He had been alive before but bound by grave clothes.

And the Christian that is listening even a little bit to the counsel of the world, who sits even occasionally in the seat of the scornful or stands even occasionally in the sinner's way or who reads his Bible with

any other reason but relish and delight, he's alive all right, but he still has grave clothes on. Oh my God, that we might be loosed and let go. Loose him and let him go.

Well, just as long as we think this weird looking bandage affair is a real Christian, we will never do anything about it. And there are those who write books and even write songs in defense of the wrapped-up Lazarus. Lazarus, he's alive, isn't he? Praise the Lord. And in the judgment day or the day of Christ's coming, we'll all get unwrapped. No, sir, Jesus said unwrap him now, unwrap him now. Loose him, let him go now.

It is not the will of God that His children should wear the old-fashioned wrapping they used to wrap babies in, swaddling clothes. No wonder the women in those bad old days lost about three out of five of their children. The old lady told her young daughter in law very sharply how she should raise her baby and she said, I ought to know, I've lost five.

And that was the way back in those old days. About half of them lived and the other half died, and I wonder how they could keep from dying when you consider that they wrapped them up like an automobile accident victim from head to feet and they couldn't move hands or feet. I don't think God wants His people to be wrapped in either grave clothes or swaddling clothes. He wants His people not only to be alive but to have the use of their members--be free. And thus, to prosper and succeed in everything they do.

This is a wonderful time this morning for us to take stock, look ourselves over and pour out our confession. I don't think that anybody ought to take communion without confession. And by confession, I don't mean a confession to me or any other living man on this earth. Against whom have we sinned? Against God. All right, confess to God. If I've sinned against somebody, I would confess to somebody. But have I sinned against God? Why should I drag the third party and confess to him? I confess to the one I've offended.

If I have wronged My Lord by unsuccessful living and failure, then I ought to bow my head right now and be in communication with the One I've wronged. Say, have mercy upon me O God according to Thy loving kindness and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my sins. For against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight. I don't believe in confessing to a third party. If I wronged McAfee, I'm not going to confess to Maxey. I have not wronged him I have wronged him. I confess to the man I'm wronged. So, bow your head and confess to the one you have wronged.

Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight, O God. Tell God about that. Don't carelessly, please, better skip it than carelessly receive the communion. Let a man examine himself and let him so take, said Paul.

So, let's examine ourselves. Are we successful in our Christian lives? Are we bearing fruit in season? Is what we're doing prospering? Are we free children of the resurrection? Are we God's samples of God's children and of God's handiwork? If we're not, something is wrong. And whatever that wrong is, let's find it and admit it and confess it to God. The Lord will wash it away by the blood of His Son. Starting right this morning, we can begin a brand-new life in Christ. Amen.