

The Voice of the Saved

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There is a difference between being lost and being damned. I have heard men in their eagerness and urgency of spirit refer to sinners as damned and invite them to come. It's a total impossibility for a damned man to make any approach toward God. The fact is there is a difference between being lost and being damned.

Being lost is what everybody is who is not saved. But being damned is what the lost are after it's too late, and there is no hope for them ever to return. We are not damned in this world. We are lost in this world. By, we, I mean people. Men can be lost in this world and lost finally or damned in the world to come.

So, men are lost, but they are not deserted. Scripture says, my Spirit shall not always strive with man. Those are our words, our burning words. My Spirit shall not always strive with man. But while they carry a finality about them like doom, they also carry hope in them because you could not say, my spirit shall not always strive except the spirit were striving. The fact that he puts the word always in there indicates that there is a time when the spirit is striving, and that time is now.

Now I would, if I were writing a book, put a little footnote in for by way of explanation, and I would say that it's necessary to annotate what I have said and put this footnote in that there may be individual persons who have been deserted and with whom the spirit no longer strives. But now those are individual persons I'm talking about and not the great masses who are simply careless and sinning and not minding it.

Now, not only is it true that man is lost, but not deserted, but it's true that God is entreating us, be ye reconciled to God, and His voice is sounding in many voices. I've talked about the voice of the lost, and I've talked about the voice of Christ's blood, and the voice of conscience, and the voice of reason, and the voice of God's love, and I could go on and on because there are so many more voices than I have been able to designate.

But tonight, I want to talk about the voice of the redeemed, and what I want to say is this, summing it up before I begin, is that the ransomed, the ransomed, have a voice, and that voice is sounding, and sounding not only now in the testimony of living men, but it's sounding down the years. It is the voice of the ransomed, and they're all saying the same thing. They are saying, be ye reconciled to God.

Now a little text, if I wanted to use a text, would be that one in Hebrews, wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about, with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight.

Now Paul, of course, or whoever wrote the book of Hebrews, had in mind the old Roman amphitheater, where they used to meet, as they meet here in the Maple Leaf Gardens, or in Yankee Stadium, or wherever men do meet to put on games. Paul must have attended them sometime in his life, though I seriously doubt whether he ever bothered much

with them after he got right with God. I doubt it. I don't say he didn't, but I say it doesn't seem like Paul to write. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, unto Timothy, my beloved son, meet me tomorrow morning down at Maple Leaf. I don't think he would write that. I can't conceive it, though I don't say it would be wrong to do it. I just say I think he was too busy, but he did draw on his knowledge of the games, the Olympic Games, and so he paints a picture here for us.

I'm assuming Paul wrote the book of Hebrews I explained when I began my morning talks on the book of Hebrews, and nobody knows for sure who wrote it. But if it wasn't Paul, it was somebody else, and my personal opinion is if it wasn't Paul, it was a man named Paul. So, if I say Paul, you more or less have my opinion of what I think about it.

But whoever wrote this was used to the Olympian Games and knew about them. One thing that evidently impressed him deeply was tier upon tier upon tier of spectators all the way around. And the tracks down here and the wrestling arenas and boxing arenas and all the rest could be seen. And then tier upon tier upon tier from the person down here, as if it had gone into heaven itself, of people all the way around. And they were looking on, seeing therefore, he said, that we have so great a cloud, and they looked like a cloud. As you were down there looking out, they might look well, look like a cloud, seeing you have a great cloud of witnesses.

Who were these witnesses? We won't press it too far nor try to go profoundly into exegesis here, but only say that these runners who were down here running, or anybody, athlete of any sort, but runners in that chapter, they were greatly affected by the people round about them. Every preacher knows he preaches better to a large crowd, and everybody that engages in competitive sports knows he does it better to a large crowd. And everybody knows, too, that if a man is competing in the games, he will do his work better if he knows that some of the old champions are present.

A fighter goes into the ring to defend his title or to try to take another title, and there's just another Joe back there, another Mary, on the way up to the spectators all the way around. But if he knows back here there are men who themselves once competed in that same arena and won and were champions and wore the laurel and who know what it's about and who bear the scars and bruises of the contest on them, I think that these athletes have a good deal more spirit when they go into the contest.

And so the man of God who wrote the Hebrews said, listen you people that are halfway in and halfway out, don't you know that here were the old champions that competed in the ring of faith once, who fought, who ran, who boxed, who threw lance. These men of faith, don't you know about Abel and don't you know about Noah? And don't you know that that old champion back there, Joseph and and Jacob and Moses, they all sit there. They won, they won, they were, they bear the marks and the scars of their combat on them. But they're around you everywhere and their voices, even though you don't hear them, the voices are there, the voices that are more eloquent than in the oratory, the voices of the redeemed who have made it through and who by the grace of God have laid down their cross and picked up their crown and are now safe from it all.

No more contests, no more tears, no more bruises, no more heartache, no more grief, no more being out of breath and ready to drop with fatigue, no more hunger, no more rags,

no more nakedness, no more persecution, no more jails. They've made it through, the Saints of God, and they are saying to us and saying to everybody, come on, come on, don't, don't, the other fellow's as tired as you are, give it another half mile, you can do it, come on. It's the cheer that we get from other people.

Why do we like to meet in meetings like this? Well, you don't have to meet like this to be a Christian. You're a Christian because you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And you're a Christian because He gives you power to become the sons of God when you believe on His name. That's why you're a Christian.

So, you're not a Christian? Christianity doesn't rub off from the elbow of the man that sits near to you. It doesn't come out to you in a song. It doesn't come to you by the talk and conversation of the people. But being a Christian, it's great to be with other Christians, to be surrounded by witnesses who will say, I made it, you can.

That's why I believe we make a great mistake when we draw too sharp lines between young people and older people in our churches. I'm not going to say we must abolish the young people's societies, but I do say that we have made great mistakes down the years by drawing a sharp chasm between the old people and the young people. Do you know the young people need to be around the old people and the old fellow that has come up the hard way and lived and loved and served and walked with his God until the sun is shining on his old gray dome and everybody knows what kind of a saint he's been.

The very fact he's there will give to the young fellow more zip and more spirit and will urge him to prayer and will nudge him along to want to walk with his God a whole lot better if the young fellow sees the old fellow. But if we separate the church down the middle and say, oh, you young people who don't know much about it, you worship God over here and the old saints over here, I think it's a great mistake. I think that the old saints need the young people.

The old sheep need the sight of the lambs. And I think also that the lambs need the old sheep. And so the man of God says here, why you look around you, he says, these witnesses, they were only in their imagination, of course, because they couldn't actually see from heaven above. I assume they couldn't anyhow. I'd hate to think that some of the dear old saints who've gone to heaven would have to look down. I'd hate to think that the early Christian and Missionary Alliance people would have to look down and see the mess we're in.

And I'd hate to think that the Methodists that started that great denomination would have to look down now on some things that are going on in that denomination. And so with all the denominations, practically all of them, I don't know any of them, but what their founders would be grief stricken, if not downright ashamed.

So, I hope that God spares the saints the sight of what's going on on the earth, but they're there anyhow, their presence is there. A cloud of witnesses grating away into glory itself. And so every Christian that gets on his knees now and prays knows that he is in the way the Father's trod. He knows that he has all holy tradition behind him. He knows that he has Bible history behind him. He knows that he has the call and hears the

call and the voice of the saints who've made good. And he knows he's being cheered on by men living and dead who walked with God and are walking with God.

Now these witnesses, a great crowd of them, I say, you're not hearing their sermons maybe, nor hearing their songs because their tongues are silent now. And we're not hearing John Wesley and John Knox and Martin Luther and Charles Finney and the rest of them. We're not hearing them, but yet we're hearing them too. We're hearing their voices, the voice of silence, the voice of the knowledge that they did it, they went, they made it true by the grace of God. They walked with the Lord and are not for the Lord took them. And that to any Christian is a great source of encouragement.

The older Psalm writers of the Psalms used to say in the hour of their great distress and pressure of soul, they used to say they remembered the days of old, the years that were past and how God, what had God had done to their fathers and done for their fathers. And they said, O God, you did it for our fathers, do it for us. And they took courage from the fact that around them, grating away to the skies were great clouds of men and women who walked with God and sleep now waiting for the trumpet that shall wake the dead.

And so the voices of the saved are coming to us out of the world above. I don't mean literally that if you cock your ear, you can hear John Wesley again or Martin Luther. I wish I could. I wish I could. I'd fast a week if I thought it would help me, but I know I can't ever hear them again. I can read their works, but I can't hear them speak because their voices are for a little time silent and yet they're not silent. I repeat, they're being heard. The fact that they ever lived is a voice. The fact that they walked with God is a reason why I can walk with God.

And so, lives speak with a loud voice to us, even though their tongues are silent. The fact that redeemed men have been here constitutes a powerful argument for the Christian faith. The fact that anybody has lived a Christian life in a world like this, there has been a good and holy man in a world like this, that in itself constitutes a powerful argument for the validity and authenticity of the New Testament and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So bad is the world, so deep in sin, so bad is human nature, so unutterably, incurably evil is human nature, that if there was not something supernatural in the gospel of Christ, nobody could be a Christian.

When I first became a Christian, I was converted, as you may have heard me say. I was converted in an old-fashioned, simple, old-fashioned way. I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I went and joined a church and got to work. That's about all there was to it, but the transformation was complete, revolutionary, and final. It happened, and I know it happened.

Then later on in my life I began to read every kind of atheistic literature, the philosophies of the Romans like Kyrgios and the rest of them, who did not believe in Christ, the Greeks and the Romans, who did not believe in God. Some of them, this Lucretius, who wrote his Nature of Things, did not believe in God, nor in any world

above. I read at least his Nature of Things, and I read as much or more atheistic literature as I did Christianity.

I used to get on my knees after I had read a book or read a chapter or two in a book, and he pushed me into a corner and proved that I couldn't prove there was any God and that I was having hallucinations and all the rest. I couldn't answer it because I wasn't scholar enough to do it, but I would turn away from that book and get on my knees, and with tears near the surface I would kneel, and with joy in my heart thank God that I had found Him before I found that book, that I had found Him before I had found a book that said I couldn't find Him, that I had been converted before I read the book that said conversion was a hallucination.

I knew what conversion had done for me. It had taken a high-tempered, sulky, angry, mean-spirited rascal of a young fellow and had turned him into a God-loving and Christ-honoring young fellow who wanted to do the will of God the best he knew how, so I knew he couldn't argue me down because I already had what they said I couldn't have. So the fact that any righteous man ever lived in the world is a good sound argument for Christianity because without this power of the gospel no man could be a good man.

And then the fact that any redeemed man ever lived in the world constitutes a convincing witness against sin-loving men and indifferent men and stubborn men who refuse to walk with God. If any good man ever lived, that man may long be sleeping in his dust, now be moldering along with the just. And still the fact that he ever lived is saying to every sin-lover, you ought not to love sin, saying to every indifferent man, you ought to wake up and do something about your soul. And it constitutes an eloquent entreaty.

Let us, says the Holy Ghost, see them by their hair, the old champions, the old champions with the withered leaves on their brows and the bruises and scars and marks to show where once in combat they fought or ran or wrestled. Now you're in there. You can do it. Wonderful what a little encouragement will do for people.

Long ago I asked the Lord to give me the spirit of Barnabas. You know, Barnabas was called the man of good words. He spoke good, encouraging words. And a good, encouraging word to a Christian who is having a tough time of it sometimes will help them very greatly.

Well, now these voices, I don't think I need to go into it in any great detail, but I think here about this man Abel that we've talked about before, he being dead yet speaketh, and his loyal obedience to God cost him his life. I suppose it did. I think he probably was the first martyr. He certainly was the first man murdered in the world, and his killing was the first fratricide, the first murder. And Cain killed him as the first murderer; Abel, the first man murdered.

But I would suppose from reading it, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament commentary on it, I would suppose it was his faith that cost him his life because he believed in Jesus or in looking forward to the cross. As we look back, he believed in God.

He believed in the efficacy of the shed blood, and so he brought a lamb and slew it. And God spoke His word of approval, and Cain heard it. And Cain got no approval, and so Cain became angry. And I would suppose there was the first time the flesh and the Spirit ever came together in hostile warfare. Later on, we see it plenty.

Later on, we see it in Jacob and Esau. Later on, we see it in David and Saul. Later on, we see it in Peter and Judas. Later on, we see it all down the centuries, the hostile conflict between that which is of the flesh and that which is of the Spirit. But this is the first indication of it, that there was Abel. They looked for him and found him buried out there somewhere, a shallow grave with the leaves pulled over him, and Cain trying to look innocent. But God said, I hear a voice. I hear a voice. It's the voice of Abel. It's the voice crying from the ground.

There is another voice, as this twelfth chapter tells us, that cries more loudly, and that's the voice of Jesus' blood, which cries not for justice but mercy. But the voice of Abel's blood does cry, and it tells us, I made it. Now I would like to ask these men, I would like to ask these men if it were possible, Abel, you could have lived a long time.

Men lived a long time in those days, up to 969 one man lived. You might have lived upwards of a thousand years, Abel, but because you insisted upon praying and obeying God and living a right life and trusting in a bloody sacrifice, you got killed early when you were a young chap. If you had it to do over again, would you do it, Abel? You know what Abel would say.

Do you think for one second that Abel would sulk and say, I'm sorry? From his high place yonder, is he sorry? Ask the captain that brings his ship in through the roaring storm, and all battered and bruised, in her safe harbor, asking, Captain, are you sorry you brought her in? Are you sorry for the wind and the gale and the howling storm? And he'd smile and say, No. Now I look back and I enjoyed it. The main thing is she's tied up safe and her cargo safe and her people are safe.

So, we ask Abel, Abel, are you sorry you had such a stormy voyage? And I'm sure he would smile and say, No. The voice of that redeemed man is saying to every one of you, get on your knees and do it and get right with God and straighten your lives out and quit fooling and quit trying to be a Western 20th century, civilized, educated, sophisticated, overstuffed Canadian American or whatever you are, and believe in God now and get right and streamline your life and strip for the race. That's what Abel would say to us if he were speaking. I think he probably would say it in a good deal more refined language than I have, but he would say something like that.

Then there was Enoch who walked with God and God took him because he pleased God. Now if you asked Enoch, are you sorry about this? Do you wish it was some other way now? No. Enoch would smile and say, how could I, a man who walked with God and then was taken to be with God, a man who spoke in the power of the Holy Ghost and left my testimony among men? Do you think I'm sorry now? No. No, he's not sorry.

Ask that soldier who, as the famous Canadian regiment did here at Dieppe—is that the way you pronounce that? French town? I never could pronounce it right. But the other day they had the anniversary of it here in the newspapers, and over the radio they

talked about it. Canadian soldiers made themselves famous around the world. By that terrible fight, some of them came away. A great many of them sleep over there.

But some of them came away from that, walked away from it bloody but unbowed, came back after the war was over and went back into the shops and out onto the farm and into the stores and into the classrooms and went on their regular lives. Ask any one of them, are you sorry about that? Do you wish you'd been home cutting out paper dolls? Do you wish you'd been home teaching tatting and knitting in a school for children? Not a one of them, not a one of them, but would straighten his shoulders and snap to the old military bearing and say, I'm proud, proud of my people, proud of my regiment, proud of that hour.

And you ask Enoch, ask Noah, ask Abraham. Are you sorry? Were you sucked in by the emotional vortex? Did somebody get fanatical and win you? No, Enoch would say, I walked with God. No, Noah would say, I heard a voice, and I recognized it. No, Abraham would say, I'd never go back to my idol making, never back to Ur of the Chaldees. I thank God for the high privilege, he would say, of going down with my family into the holy land and becoming the father of the faithful. And from me proceeded finally the Messiah in holy lineal descent from my loins.

Nobody was ever sorry they served God when it's all over and tent's down and the wind has blown the dust away and the devil has gone to look for somebody else and the Christian feels around for his laurels. And though he's won, nobody's ever sorry about it.

Ask old Jacob, Jacob, are you sorry? The way you lived, sorry you got wrestled with that night on the bank of the river, Jacob would smile and say, no, that's where I got my new name. Ask Joseph, Joseph, are you sorry that you saw the sheaves bowing down to you and the sun and moon stars bowing? Are you sorry, Joseph? Are you sorry for what you had to pay for your religion? No, Joseph would say, thank God. I praise him every moment for what He did. This is the cloud of witnesses, the old champions, the old, bruised champions.

Once in the early days of the church, about 324, maybe I'm wrong by a few years, there met the council of the church, the last, I would suppose, the last ecumenical council, the council of the church. And it was over the old matter of Athanasius, where they asked whether Jesus Christ was the son of God or not.

They came in. The delegates came in. They came in, not slapping each other on the back as the delegates do now when we gather in these hotels. They came limping in. They came in with one arm hanging loose in the sleeve. They came in with one eye out. Some of them came in with no tongue in their mouths. It had been torn out by pincers. Some of them came in with a foot off and some with a leg.

How did they get that way? The persecutions under the Roman emperors. The champions gathered there. Many of them had died. Millions of them had died, but a few had been tortured and turned loose. And these were the ones, many of them, not all, but many of them who came to that famous council and gave us that Athanasian creed, I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

They were the old champions. They had the scars to show for it. You suppose that after they had sat around there a few days and discussed theology and made their speeches, a young fellow just starting out who never knew persecution, sitting beside an old man with a silent tongue, the stub of a tongue, and couldn't talk but the light of God in his face, you think that young man was ever the same again? You think that he went out pitying himself because he had to give up something? I think he went out with his chin up, saying, there's a man whose tongue was torn out for his faith, and there's an old man whose leg was burnt off for his faith, and here's another man whose eye was put out for his faith. I'll never complain again.

Brethren, it's this kind of thing that I hear. I hear it in all Christian history. I hear it from the church fathers. I hear it in the voices of the patriarchs. I hear it in the psalmists and prophets and apostles. I hear these voices. They're the voice of the ransomed, the voice of the victors, the voice of the saved, and they're all saying the same thing. We made it. You can.

The blood of Jesus cleanses, the power of God enables, and God hears prayer, and He that's in you is bigger than he that is in the world. You can make it through. Don't get discouraged and pity yourself and weep on your own shoulder and get a crick in your neck from self-weeping. Quit it. Straighten up. You haven't suffered yet striving against sin.

I think about the lady whose chauffeur had driven her out, two ladies, and the chauffeur was, they were driving along, and something went wrong with the car. And here was one of these black, lovely things with a little flowerpot and a flower in it, you know, and all the little telephone and all the rest. And while the man with the uniform and the cap was out trying to fix up the engine, she patted her two gloved hands together like a martyr and turned to the friend beside her. They were on their way to a religious meeting. And she said, Now I know what the apostles went through in their day. Sitting in the back seat of a luxurious car for five minutes while the tire or the engine gets fixed. I don't think God laughs, but I wouldn't blame an angel for chuckling. And I think the devil must hold his black sides down yonder when he sees such things.

Well, they speak all with one voice, and they say we weren't compelled to suffer. Nobody put a chain around our neck and made us go. We wanted to do it. We wanted to do it. We followed the Lord because we'd chosen to follow the Lord. We wanted to follow the Lord. Both the suffering and the glory are ours by our choice. We wanted it that way. I think they all speak with one voice and say, you can serve God under any circumstances.

You can serve God in this terrible age in which we now live. You can serve God now. Circumstances may be various and different, each from the other, but you can serve God now. God will receive you and bless you and keep you, and so be reconciled to God. Don't listen too avidly to your radio. Don't sit glued as though you're hypnotized looking at your TV. Don't spend too many minutes going over your newspaper. Live clean from the world. Find out what's going on.

I always listen at ten o'clock at night to see who's going to shoot who and what Diefenbaker did and John Kennedy and the rest of them. But when that's over, I'm thinking of something else. I don't want to get so embroiled in it that I become a part of a society that I've repudiated, that I might follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes.

Now, in closing, be ye reconciled to God, and to be reconciled, one of three things happens. A and B are alienated from each other. They seek a reconciliation. There can be a reconciliation achieved between A and B one of three ways. A comes all the way over to B, or B comes all the way over to A, or they each come halfway. Either A changes completely, B changes completely, or they compromise. Be reconciled to God.

What does that mean? That God is going to come over on my side. That's the way it's preached now. God is so nice and kind and old-fashioned and Hollywood-ish that he'll come clear over on my side. No, He won't. God the eternal God. I change not, says God.

If there's any changing to be done, man, you and I have to do it. God is right the first time. You and I are always wrong, and the alienation is our fault, not His.

Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. So, if there's any coming to God, we must come to God. But you say, how can we come to God? We can come to God because Jesus Christ, who was Himself God by His blood and death, took away everything that can prevent the reconciliation.

Be ye reconciled to God. We can because seeing that He died He died once for all, and He died for all, and He took away all that was between us and God, and we can come now. So, the change must be on your part.

The reason you and God haven't been getting on is you haven't been right, and God isn't going to change. So, if you're going to be right, there's only one way to do it, and that's for you to make the change. Make the change by repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Redeemer and Lord. Will you do it?

New Christians that have dragged around and pitied yourself and lived half-out, God help you and pity you. There are a thousand voices from a thousand directions, right on this huge strip of territory from Hudson Bay to the border, from the Maritimes to Vancouver. If you could go back and know the history of the Saints that have lived right on this country, you'd straighten up and say to yourself, I can't afford to be a half-Christian.

These great Saints set an example for me down in my land, I know her sins. I know her money. I know her entertainment. I know her sins. I know her sins better than you do. I also know that you can't go into a cemetery from the rock-bound coasts of Maine to the slopes of California, but what there lies in peaceful silence the dust of some holy man or woman who lived and loved and served and suffered and rejoiced in triumph. And I can't walk as I often have walked through these old cemeteries and not know that there lies the dust sacred to God, for it was once the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost and will be again when our Lord Jesus comes to raise the dead and rapture the living.

So, the voices of holy men and women of all ages everywhere are saying, get right with God, straighten out, come to God, read the Bible, pray, get family altar, start giving, start going to prayer meetings, start having personal prayer, and God will be with you. Let's pray. It could be that somebody would like me to offer prayer for you.

Last Sunday night after service, a young man from another country who was a Roman Catholic came to me, said he had heard me twice, and he was concerned. I can't recall word for word, but something to the effect that he was deeply concerned about his soul and his relation to God. Could I help him? I prayed with him, exhorted him, and then told him to read the gospel of John prayerfully, asking God for light.

Maybe he's here tonight. I hope he is. He promised to keep in touch with me. Maybe you would like to have me pray for you. If you would, the simplest old-fashionedest way I know is just to raise the hand, so I'll know who wants prayer. Would you raise the hand? Who would like to have me pray for you? For any need at all that might be in your life, any need that might be in your life, put the hand up. We'll know that somebody wants prayer.

Dear Lord Jesus, we pray tonight that Thou wilt help us to hear Thy people. Oh, we thank Thee for that glorious Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blessed, where dwell the spirits of just men made perfect, and where Thy church will someday be.

We thank Thee, O Lord Christ, victorious, triumphant Lord Jesus. God hath made Thee both Lord and Christ, and hath set Thee Head over all things to the church, and hath made Thee heir of all things. Thou who art the shining forth of His glory, and express image of His person, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we love Thee, Lord Jesus.

We want to serve Thee. We want this church to be a Christ's church, indeed. We repudiate the ways of worldly churches. We repudiate the psychology and philosophy of worldly churches. We insist we want to be a New Testament church. Make it so, Lord, we pray Thee. Bless these dear friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.