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SERIOUS TRUTHS FOR CONSIDERATION.
By Frederick J. Jobson, D.D.
SERIOUS TRUTHS.

Reader, have you ever spent a single hour in continuous thought upon your spiritual and eternal interests? You have spent many hours in thinking of temporal things, and have shown by your devoted attention to them that you are capable of fixing your mind upon a given object, and of pursuing it with persistent energy. Indeed, for thought on earthly concerns, ordinary periods have not been viewed as long enough, and you have not unfrequently deprived yourself of sleep, and borrowed time from the night, to think further on what had engrossed your powers during the day. But you know the supreme importance of what relates
to your undying soul over what temporarily belongs to your perishable body. You know that you are here but for a few years, that you must, afterward, live forever in unspeakable happiness or indescribable misery; and that upon your character in this brief probationary state of existence depends your everlasting destiny in the world to come.

What subject, then, is so important to you as that of your spiritual and eternal welfare? and what subject ought to employ your thoughts in comparison with it? Is it rational to pass months and years in following things that are temporal, and not to occupy a single hour with things that are eternal? Resolve to devote this hour to consideration for your soul. You have power over your own mind. You can fix your thoughts intently on the subject of your choice. Make now a determined effort; and for a brief period, at least, act the manly part of constraining your reason to exercise itself on
what is transcendentally important to you, and on what you know ought to have precedence of all things whatever. You have this interval unengaged by indispensable attention to other cares. Employ it, resolutely, in serious thoughts upon your spiritual state, before God, and in its relation to eternity.

And do you not feel within yourself that you are not fulfilling the grand object of existence, and that in your present condition you are unprepared for death, and for the eternal world? There is a deep consciousness of this within your nature, which is strengthened by reflection on the actions of your past life. What is your state now? It is one of alienation from God, the awful and infinite Source of your being. You have no delight in contemplating his character; no communion with him; and no enjoyment in his service. You pass through whole days without thinking of him; and if a thought of his presence arise within your mind, it
is instantly suppressed as an unwelcome intruder. Your thoughts, affections, and pursuits are all of earth and the creature, and you have no reference in what you do to the glory of the Creator.

*Is it not true?* Is it not a fact supported by indisputable proof? What is the habitual complexion of your mind? Where fly your multitudinous thoughts? What calls forth your strongest energies? What gives you the sweetest pleasure and highest delight?

Answer these inquiries in faithfulness to yourself, and then say if you are living "without God in the world." If there were no Almighty Creator and Governor of the Universe; if there had been no Divine Benefactor sustaining, protecting, and blessing you from day to day; if there were to be no hereafter, and you had no immortality of spiritual existence, you could only live and act as you do. *Is it not so?* Reflect, and answer according to truth, and you will
SERIOUS TRUTHS.

acknowledge that you are not of God, but of the world.

You are not satisfied in this state of mind and heart. It is not reasonable that you should be. You know that you are an accountable being. The monitor within often reminds you that you were made for higher ends than those which you pursue; and that for all the deeds done in the body God will bring you to judgment. Mercifully, it is a law of man’s nature not to have satisfaction but in a sense of doing right. And this law within will maintain its authority, whatever may be the fictitious circumstances without to dazzle and to allure. No human being can approve himself unless he knows that he aims at doing what is right and good before God and man; and without self-approval as to purpose the soul can have no rest. There is a feeling of dishonor and condemnation in the breast of the unfaithful servant who neglects his Master’s interests, and who abuses his
master's confidence; and it is so with all who know that they were made for God, and yet neglect his service and abuse his goodness. *It must be so.* And as the Scripture declares, “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Then there are the dreadful consequences in the life to come, which haunt the mind, and disturb it amid its false pleasures and wrong pursuits.

Reader, pause on this topic, and compel your soul to say if this declaration is true, and that from its own experience. Has not this state of dissatisfaction with self, this inward disquietude, this unrest of soul been yours? Waive not the inquiry because it is unpleasant. Bring the mind resolutely to it, and hold it firmly there until the conclusion is distinct and positive before it. You *know* that it is with the ungodly as here affirmed. It is so with *you*; and it must ever be so while you love not God nor glorify him.
This you admit. But you profess the purpose to amend your life at some more convenient season than the present, and then to apply your powers to their intended object, that you may become the willing and obedient servant of the Lord. By what law, ask yourself, are you justified in the neglect of duty? If you ought to serve God at all, you ought to serve him now. Think of this and say upon what ground you can reasonably rest the purpose to delay. Has not the Almighty the same claims upon you now that he will have then? In what revelation is it found that a part, and not the whole, of your lifetime is to be given to God? Can you find anywhere in the Bible, or in human experience, that man's probationary life is too long in which to prepare for eternity? Have the best of men found it to be so? Did any one of them say—even the longest livers—that they had time to spare? Have not all God's servants hearkened approvingly to the
admonition, "Redeeming the time, knowing that the days are evil?" Is it becoming that you should give your youth and strength to rebellion against the Most High, and then your weakness and infirmity to his service? And is it grateful and appropriate that the flower and fruit of life should be given to Satan, and its withered stalk be offered to the Lord?

But consider what you are really doing by this delay. You are depriving your soul of its highest good and of its fullest enjoyment. You have seen that in a state of alienation from God a man can have no peace. But in the service of Jehovah there is more than peace; there is happiness. There is the blissful satisfaction of feeling that there is real and substantial good possessed by rightly-directed faculties. Religion is not a mere arbitrary government of man, without reference to his adaptations and capacities. It contemplates his nature, and supplies to it what it needs, and what
will draw forth that nature to its utmost reach. It fills the heart with all its yearnings, and satisfies it with goodness. Nothing else can do this. As soon might a triangle fill a circle or the toys of childhood give solid enjoyment to man, as the ill-proportioned and empty baubles of earth fill the circumference of the soul's immortal desires. *It cannot be.*

The adaptation is not there. In the very nature of things it is impracticable. And all attempts to satisfy the spiritual mind with temporal things are attempts for a hopeless impossibility. Reflect on this, and say if it is not a self-evident truth which cannot be denied?

But in real religion there is satisfactory pleasure and true happiness. There is the joyful assurance of living under the favor of God, and not under his frown. There is the inestimable privilege of communion with him, and of casting all your care upon him who careth for you. There is the settled confidence that the
course of your life, with all its gains and losses, enjoyments and sufferings, is under the superintending providence of your heavenly Father, who will make all things work together for your good. There is companionship with the most upright and pure of mankind. And amid all the dangers of this mortal life there is the consciousness of safety for eternity, with the blissful anticipation of everlasting enjoyments in the life to come. With all this good in possession, and with all this blessedness in prospect, how can the servant of God be otherwise than happy? It is not denied that in religion there is self-denial and suffering. There is in it what is opposed to corrupt human nature, but, with it, the preponderance of happiness in this life is so great, over that of a life of worldliness and sin, that reason properly exercised can have no difficulty in deciding for it. So that to delay a religious course to a future period is, in the mean time, to rob your soul of its
richest heritage, and voluntarily to deprive yourself of real bliss.

If religion were gloomy and melancholy in its character, as some represent—if it brought pain rather than pleasure to the life of man—it would be cruelty to your old age, with all its weakness and infirmity, to defer till then the suffering to be endured. In justice to your own nature you ought to take the increased burden when best able to sustain it. But it is not so. Religion is not an increase of man’s sorrows, but a relief to them. Her “yoke is easy, and her burden is light.” Ungodliness is, as we have seen, unsatisfactory. Sinful pleasures and worldly possessions do not yield solid enjoyment, as the history and experience of their most successful votaries assuredly prove. No servant of God ever exclaimed of spiritual pursuits, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” No follower of the Saviour, feeling the delights of religion pall upon him, offered, like Tiberius,
large rewards for the invention of a new pleasure. No child of God ever gasped, with Lord Byron, a sentence of unmixed misery such as

"Years, all winters!"

Or ever, in premature old age, had occasion to declare with him:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flower and fruit of life are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

No expiring Christian ever shrieked with terror like professed skeptics, or exclaimed, "I am taking a leap into the dark." To say nothing of the calm serenity of age, as seen in the countenance and demeanor of pious men and women whom you have known—perhaps of your own father and mother—there are present joys which unspeakably surpass all that earthly and sinful possessions and pursuits can possibly afford. Weigh these considerations in the balances of your reason, and say if to defer religion to a
future period of your life is just and wise to yourself, and if, in doing so, you are not sinning against your own interests.

Consider, also, that by delay you are disqualifying yourself for the possession and enjoyment of what is acknowledged to be essential to your safety and happiness before you enter upon the life to come. The powers of man decline with the advance of years, so that he becomes less vigorous in intellect and less capable of active exertion.

Memory weakens, and is more and more unable to recall the past with distinctness and certainty. The great Sir Isaac Newton could not, in his old age, recall the process of calculation by which he had demonstrated the movements of the planetary system. And if old men remember signal events and circumstances of youth, which by repeated thought in succeeding years they have fixed indelibly upon the mind, yet they forget what transpired in more recent
periods. So that it is not at all uncommon for an aged person, while relating what occurred in the days of his boyhood, to have no remembrance of what took place within the month just past.

Then reason becomes increasingly enfeebled. The memory failing, and the mind being unable to hold long enough in comparison the different parts of a subject, the conclusion is uncertain even if the judgment were itself unimpaired.

Quickness of apprehension, liveliness of emotion, and strength of impulse, fail with the process of years; so that in advanced life few men attempt anything that taxes their mental powers to a great extent. An aged man does not enter upon the study of a new language, or upon the investigation of a new branch of science.

But religion, let it be remembered, claims the full powers of the mind, and is above all systems of mere human learning or science. When memory has
so far faded in its impressions that few circumstances of former periods in life can be traced upon it, is that a state in which to begin to think of past sins for repentance? When reason is weak and feeble, is that a condition of mind in which to unravel the intricacies of conscience, so long neglected and disordered?"

When apprehension is dull, and the man needs to have things explained to him again and again, is that a situation in which to inquire for the way of life? And when nature is sluggish and desirous of repose, is that the time in which to flee from the wrath to come?

Think, too, of the hardening and blunting process of delay in turning to God. In every instance where conscience is disregarded its voice within the soul is weakened and deadened, until by repeated abuse it becomes feeble in its reproofs. In every resistance of the heart to the strivings of the Holy Spirit it becomes harder and less susceptible of
impression; so that in process of time the conscience becomes *seared* as with a hot iron; it ceases to vibrate and tremble under accusation, and the feeling heart of flesh hardens into the insensibility of stone. The truth and reality of this may be found in the actual condition of persons who do, with the thought of delay, resist conscience and the Holy Ghost. Now, as in the case of Pharaoh, men become increasingly hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. In youth they feel, and weep, and pray, under faithful preaching of the truth, and under parental calls to love and serve God; but in advanced life they have no meltings of soul, and no disposition to heed religious counsel.

Then a sinner, hardened by long continuance in iniquity, will not unfrequently be found to have invented a religion for himself. He imagines that in this, as in other things, he has become sagacious and knowing by the process of years and
experience. He considers that he is not to be viewed as one who has been unob­servant of what has passed in the Church and in the world, and as one who has been entirely without thought and judg­ment on spiritual concerns. He ac­knowledges himself to be a sinner, like every other human being; but “God is merciful” he pleads.

Then, “remember what he has suffered and done in the world.” He argues as if loss and affliction were to be taken as atonement for sin, and as if acts of be­nevolence and charity would procure eternal life. He believes in Jesus Christ as a Saviour for all mankind, and, there­fore, for him; and believing in him, how can he, though a sinner, be lost? the Scriptures forbid the thought of such a direful issue.

And thus, in many cases, persons who procrastinate and delay to receive the salvation of the Gospel, have sent them, judicially, from God, “strong delusion,
that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” It is a fearful truth that the opportunity of salvation may not be extended to the end of life. The resisting, incorrigible sinner may be abandoned by the Almighty as having been sufficiently striven with, and he may be left to perish in his iniquity. “My Spirit,” says the Lord, “shall not always strive with man.” Knowing not the day of his visitation, the things belonging to his peace may forever be hidden from his eyes. How dreadful the state and end of Saul, the king, after that the Lord had departed from him! How terrible the case of Judas Iscariot, after that Satan had entered into him! And how alarming the state of many in the present day, who in early life were tender and impressionable by the truth, and by the calls of Divine Providence, but who now are hard and insensible under the most
faithful preaching and the most signal events.

Thus, as might be apprehended, the fact is, few persons, comparatively, are converted to God in old age. Search the records of the Churches from the periods of life at which members were received into them, and you will find that by far the larger number of Church members became such in youth, and not in mature age. It is not often that a man beyond middle life changes his course for religion any more than for other things. The Rev. William Jay, of Bath, declared at the celebration of his ministerial jubilee, that in the entire course of his ministry he had not known of more than two persons converted to God after they had reached fifty years of age. And though some may know of a larger proportion of converts in advanced years than that venerable servant of the Lord knew of, yet all will be ready to testify that conversion in old age is an exception
and not the rule. So that for the sinner to delay repentance and return to God till old age is to put his soul's interests to tremendous hazard. It is to risk the barest possibility amid surrounding improbability, and to expect for himself what nearly all others fail to realize. Most persons die as they have lived, as might be predicated from the purpose and end of probationary existence. Few, comparatively, experience more than overwhelming terror in "death-bed repentance;" and though we do not limit Almighty grace, which saves the infant and the idiot, and which can save the decrepit, imbecile, and dying old man, yet this is not to be looked for and relied upon. Life is a state preparatory to death; and in time character is formed for eternity.

But it may not be that you will live to be old. You think that you will. Most persons think so for themselves. Yet the large majority of human beings do not
alize this. Thirty years include the period allotted to a generation, and is the average length of man's life on earth. Why should you, then, expect unusual extension of probation for yourself? Are you stronger than many others? The stout towering tree not unfrequently is broken down suddenly in the storm, while the pliant weakling survives. "As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time." Self-confidence for life is no favorable sign; for "in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh." The mechanism of the body is so fine and complicated that it may at any moment be disordered and disturbed. Disease flies on the wings of the wind. Fever charges the atmosphere with infection. "The pestilence walketh in darkness, and destruction wasteth at noon day." Accidents, against which no foresight can provide, await man in every path. A
falling slate or tile, loosened in its hold upon the roof, may terminate life instantly. A false step, a hidden piece of bone, yea, the failure of a blood-vessel in the brain, may occasion sudden death, in which there shall not be space for repentance and faith. How unreasonable, then, to delay the momentous work of salvation to so unlikely and uncertain a period!

And what is even the longest life on earth but, as represented in Scripture, “a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?” “Man that is born of a woman is of few days.” Ask the aged man what he thinks of the length of life, and he will assure you that it seems but as yesterday when he was young. Look back on the portion of your own existence already gone. It is but as a dream in the night. The whole space of man’s earthly existence is so narrow that inspiration compares it to a mere “hand’s breadth.”
"We spend our years as a tale that is told."

Consider how much of this brief period must of necessity be spent in worldly concerns, in receiving food, and in sleep, and then see how short the time is for spiritual pursuits, even on the supposition of the longest life. And sooner or later the hour of death will come. The termination of life is inevitable. No artifice, strength, pecuniary means, or medical aid can evade or overcome this destined leveler of man with the grave. This "one event happeneth unto all." Here the rich and the poor meet together; and there is no discharge in this warfare. "It is appointed unto man once to die."

Then immediately follows ETERNITY, with all its realities; with its inconceivable bliss or unbearable woe! If on passing the boundary of time heaven does not reveal to the soul its glory, then it is in darkness forever. Then, if the soul sink
down under the weight of unforgiven sin, into the

"Dungeon, horrible!
On all sides round,"

it will fall not only into a state of banishment from God, but into a state of unmitigated and unending punishment. "There the worm dieth not, and there the fire shall not be quenched." There memory, like a sleepless fiend, will haunt the soul, and pierce it through with many sorrows. The remembrance of neglected opportunities, of ruinous delay, and of lost happiness, will plunge it down to unfathomable depths of anguish; while the knowledge that misery will be everlasting will fill it with burning anguish and maddening despair. This is not exaggerated rhetoric, magnifying in representation an evil to come. It is the language of truth and soberness; for says Christ to the wicked, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The
wrath of God will be found by lost sinners to be an awful reality, far beyond what man can conceive; for "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?"

Reader, do you now ask what you shall do? Ponder these truths in your mind until you feel their weight. Consider if they really are truths, and then give to them the attention which they demand. The cause of man's insensibility to spiritual and eternal things is in his not thinking of them. Thought, and thought alone, can produce impression. Be rational and manly, then, and constrain the mind to think of what is all-important to you; and that not once only, or now and then at distant intervals; but bring the truths set forth in these pages to your view again and again. Revolve them in your mental vision; and as they pass before you, ask of each truth as it comes, Is this so? And then follow out in your thinking the consequences belonging to it. The want of
consideration, rather than knowledge, is the ruin of souls. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" said Moses, when on the eve of his departure from a stiffnecked and rebellious people. And the Almighty calls upon all creation to hearken to his complaint of the want of consideration by the recipients of his fatherly goodness: "Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know: my people doth not consider." Let not neglect of the duty of consideration be your ruin.

Employ suitable means to keep the impression of these truths upon your mind. Let nothing dissipate your thoughts nor deaden your feelings concerning them. Avoid levity and worldly excitement, which too many resort to for relief from seriousness and spiritual anxiety. You
must be serious, if you are to be saved. *Read the Scriptures*, and ascertain from God's own word what you ought to be, and what you ought to do. Remember it is not human opinion which is to direct and govern you, but divine revelation; and that by it you will be judged at the last day. Possessing the right to read and to interpret the Holy Scriptures for yourself, apply your mind to the diligent study of them, that they may make you wise unto salvation. Know for yourself if an unforgiven sinner shall perish. Heed not the presumptuous reasonings of men who, professing themselves more merciful than the Lord, would put aside inspired declarations concerning everlasting punishment of sin.

And then, with the full assurance that "God is angry with the wicked every day," and that he "will by no means spare the guilty," realize the awful fact, that you are condemned by the law and exposed to everlasting punishment. Pon-
der in your mind what it is for the immortal soul to perish—to be cast out forever from the presence of the Most High, and from companionship of the blessed and the good, and to sink down under divine malediction to the depths of endless misery and despair.

Fail not to apply to yourself the truth, that you are liable thus to perish forever, and that every moment. Consider the uncertainty of life. Think of the innumerable dangers which surround you at every step; and that at any instant your probationary state may close, and you may lose all opportunity of working out the salvation of your soul.

Attend the house of God, and learn the truth as expounded and enforced by Christian preachers. Shield not yourself from immediate application of what you hear, by the vague and prevalent idea that what is proclaimed from the pulpit is for the congregation in general, but not for you personally. Meditate upon the truths
you read and hear, and think of them as you rise up, as you lie down, and as you walk by the way. Let not worldly cares and perishable things dissipate your thoughts, and divert your mind from what is more important. Reflect that it is for everlasting life you are inquiring, and that the object you have in view infinitely surpasses in value any other object that can be contemplated.

Hearken not to the evil counsels of the ungodly, who, deriding your serious looks and inquiries, would lead you forth to earthly pleasures and pastimes as the true remedy for your anxieties and fears. Circles of gayety and places of revelry are unsuited to you, if you would flee from the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life. Associate with the people of God, and learn from them how they were brought to feel their sinfulness, and how they obtained mercy.

Above all, pray for divine illumination and help. "If any of you lack wisdom
let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Be candid and submissive before the Almighty; for “it any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine.” You are sure to obtain divine aid if you sincerely and perseveringly ask for it. Inquire with Saul of Tarsus, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do.” Pray, now that you are alone with God. Let not one prayer suffice, but pray again and again; and pray that the Holy Spirit may work in your soul due concern for salvation.