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REMEMBERING LIFE'S TRUE END.

A Sermon Preached at First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, by Rev. Geo. W. Truett.

Text:—"She remembereth not her last end; and, therefore, she came down wonderfully; she had no comforter."—Lamentations 1:9.

Those of you who have carefully read this little book of five chapters will recall that it is devoted to a discussion of the downfall of the city of Jerusalem, and the lessons attendant upon such downfall. This book of Lamentations, from first to last, is the cry of a stricken people. The explanation of it all is given in the book itself. Here was a people who abused their privileges, who forgot their opportunities, who despised a right religious life, and who, in due time, plunged into the gulf of irretrievable woe. Hear the prophet as he speaks of this doomed city, explaining the cause of her doom in the language of the text: "She remembereth not her last end; and, therefore, she came down wonderfully; she had no comforter." I do not need to pursue the story of the downfall of ancient Jerusalem and the reason therefor, as I have just indicated; but simply take the fact, as indicated in the text, and let it point for us the lesson which it has for us.

What is the lesson? It is that it behooves us all to consider the end of life; that is, the ultimate and highest design of life, what life is for, how we are to use it, how we may so behave ourselves as not to abuse it, how we may redeem it and make it noble rather than make it ignoble and rather than waste it. It is an all-important matter that we thus consider the last proper aim and end of our lives. The true design of life, the high meaning of life, the serious aim and import of life, is a matter of such infinite importance that we all need to lay it directly to heart.

For men to include the future in their plans, is always a mark of superiority. Forethought marks the difference between the child and the man. The little child lives in the present. What cares it for the future? The little child prefers the small bag of candy today to a carload tomorrow. It does not want any tomorrow at all. All along the differences between the child and the man is marked by forethought. The difference in the forethought of the two marks the difference between the savage and the civilized man. A savage cares only for today. If his simple tastes may be gratified today, that is enough. He will not plant, he will not sow, he will not provide for tomorrow. If his appetites may be gratified today it is all he cares for or thinks of. The civilized man looks on to the future, and has an eye to sowing, and planting, and providing for tomorrow. The difference between the savage and the civilized man is the difference in forethought. The difference between men who succeed and men who do not is expressed just here. Some men live for the future largely, while others live only for today and think only for today and build only for today. Men look about and wonder how certain men have come into prominence, how they ever reached

that place where even one sentence from their lips is a thing of power. The reasons are plain and at hand. "The heights by great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight; but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night."

All true success is paid for. That is a sham success, disappointing, unsubstantial, that will not abide, if it be not paid for in the highest and deepest sense. The difference between the successful man and the unsuccessful is that one builded for the future, and the other did not; one looked beyond the present, one laid the foundations that had to do with tomorrow's life; and, therefore, when the morrow came, the foundations were so stable that upon them it was easy for him to mount to success. Now the highest type of manhood, the highest type of wisdom, is that which looks on and sees the ultimate end and high design, the glorious import of life. That is the highest expression of wisdom. Here men make shipwreck. Here the soul misses the mark, and just here is the soul overtaken and defeated and finally lost. Every man should ask: "To what purpose shall I direct my life; how may I so live as to make it count for the most?"

These are the far-seeing men, for they consider the latter end, the ultimate and highest aim of human life. Men who live this way do not live a haphazard life, or a disjointed and random sort of life. Men who earnestly inquire: "How may we make our lives what they should be?" are the men whose lives are not disjointed and haphazard, and who live to the noblest end. No great picture would ever have been brought to completion if the artist had not considered it before he ever began his work. No noble painting would ever have been brought to completion if the painter had carelessly daubed his paints here and there, without any regard to the latter end. No entrancing music would ever be improvised, if the organist should sit down and, without any sort of form or order, go about the matter of improvisation. No life is ever worthily lived when a man forgets its high design, its ultimate end.

That brings us to consider the question, what is that high design, what is that ultimate end, to what are we to strive, for what cause are we to live, upon what foundation are we to build?

Look about you and you will see the various ends towards which men and women are striving. Some of you may have read a clever little book in which is described one of the brightest of women, who stood at midnight, musing, as the old year died and the new year came in. Just as the old year passed out and the new year came in, the brilliant, fashionable, ambitious woman, with her watch in her hand, said: "If I could put all the desire of my life into one wish, I would utter it in one word, 'fame.' Oh, how she has missed the ultimate end of life! She writes well, she is clever, people may read her writings, here and there she may be quoted, but how she missed the sublime end of life! All about us men are missing life like this brilliant woman. If men were asked to put in one word their wishes for life, various answers would be given.

One man would say, "The highest ambition of my life is to possess gold." How he is missing the noble end of life! He will die at last, and will go out into the blackness of despair, and his money will pierce him through with many sorrows, and will drown him in the depths of perdition. Another would say, "If my deepest wish were gratified, it would be that I may have pleasure, just worldly pleasure." At the last, at the bottom of that cup there is a serpent with awful sting and fatal poison. Another would say: "The deepest wish of my heart is for popularity; I want pre-eminence, I want promotion, I want my name heralded throughout all the land; want popularity." What a miserable thing is that! There is nothing so unsubstantial, unreal and uncertain as popularity. The same crowd that today may cry out for a man, "Hosanna," tomorrow may shout concerning the same man, when the man has not changed at all, "Crucify him." It was so when the Master was in the flesh. It is ever so. It is so in politics. It is so in all positions among men. Oh, if there ever was a fickle thing in this world it is human applause.

To what end, then, shall a man direct his life? There is one certain, true and abiding end. There can be but one. The chief end of human life is to glorify God. A life spent in glorifying God, glorifies itself, dignifies itself, lifts up itself and saves itself. Cut off from God, any life is degraded and doomed. No man can possibly read life's ultimate design, life's highest aim, if he leaves God out of his plan. "I have set the Lord always before me," was the cry of one in the Bible, which is the proper cry for us all. "I have set the Lord always before me." No matter for the fluctuations of feeling, no matter for the changes of custom and thought, no matter for all the transitoriness of earthly things, "I have set the Lord always before me." Now, the life that has that ideal is the life that reaches the highest design and its nobles end.

In Jesus Christ is absolute satisfaction for every want and for all hungering of the immortal spirit. Christ is our model for consecration. He is the pattern for all holiness. What infinite patience, what purity, what sweetness, what sympathy, what unselfishness there was in Christ! Having Him before us always, we shall become more and more like Him. Then, Christ is the pattern for service, world-helping service, Christ-honoring service, humanity-uplifting service. The selfish man goes down to dishonor. However brilliant may be his outlook today, tomorrow he will be in the ditch. Selfishness is always suicide. The only life that meets its ultimate aim and highest design is the life reconciled to Jesus Christ and conformed to the doing of His holy will. When one's life is like that, however humble, such a life is like the dawning sunlight in the morning, driving away the darkness. Such a life is like a noble river, making everything to live whither the river goes. Such a life is like a beautiful flower, emitting its fragrance on the passing breeze, for the good cheer of all. How

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