

# WORDS OF LIFE

By R. T. HOUTS, Jr., Pastor  
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WHEN IS GOD ABLE TO  
HELP US?

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house." Luke 19: 9

Jesus came into a world where many people were attempting to buy their way into heaven. They were quite seriously concerned about such matters as washing their hands in the proper fashion before meals, and measuring how far a tailor could walk on the Sabbath, provided he left his needle at home. Some of the people whom Jesus met were certain that they had found the only way to heaven. They resented bitterly the words of Jesus when he told them that their righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or they would in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Others were haunted by the feeling that they had missed the way. They were conscious of a need in their lives which had not been filled, and they were desperately seeking someone who could help them find the way. It was this second group that Jesus was able to help.

Jesus found those who needed help in many peculiar places. He came one day to a certain pool where the lame and afflicted were known to gather. According to popular belief, if a man could get into the pool when the waters were troubled he would be healed. But few were ever able to get into the pool at the right moment. We may have the idea that the Pool of Bethesda was an attractive place, but probably it would be nearer the truth if we thought of it as a place where the sights and sounds and smells would turn a strong stomach. We might compare it with the places we know today as "skid row", a place where people have lost all hope. And let us not think that Jesus found the woman taken in adultery in the best part of town. Probably it was the poorest part of the city. In each case, Jesus was found where the greatest need was to be found.

We are not surprised when Jesus came upon a little man who had climbed a tree in his desire to see him. Jesus was being followed by a tremendous throng, for it was the most popular time of his ministry, yet he seemed to have had eyes only for the man in the tree who needed help.

When Jesus stopped to speak to Zacchaeus, there was an ugly murmur which ran through the crowd. They were following him expecting to see some great miracle performed, and they did not like for Jesus to waste his time with a hated tax collector. Yet at that very moment the people murmured against Jesus, the ones who were so certain that this despised man was not worth the time Jesus was spending on him, were further from the Kingdom of God than the man in the tree. Any minister knows that the people who are hardest to reach are not those who are down and out and who make no pretense to righteousness. They are those who are secure in their own pride.

Many things can give rise to such a dangerous state of mind. Often a person who has gained some property or wealth is lulled into a false sense of security, or a person's claim to respectability may be based on his family or social position.

Jesus made no promises to Zacchaeus. In fact, if you examine the record, you will find that he made very few promises. He understood human nature better than to do so. There is a stubborn streak in most of us which makes us avoid anything which is supposed to be good for us, whether it is carrots or religion. Some of us reach the point where we are perfectly sure that anything which is good for us is bound to taste bad. A mother says to her child, "Here, take this," and the child shakes his head. He wants none of it. Jesus did not say to Zacchaeus, "Now if you will take me home with you I have something which will be good for you." He made the simple announcement, "Come down, for this day I will dine with you in your house."

Jesus brought the greatest possible gifts to Zacchaeus. For the first time in his life he was able to see life as a whole. Whereas he had been living from day to day content to make his living by dishonest means believing that if he fed his body his soul would take care of itself, he came now to the point where he was able to see that each of us has eternity in this present life. He saw that we do not

live to ourselves alone, and that we do not live for this day alone. This has always been the viewpoint of the man who is truly religious. There is a sense of direction and purpose in his life. He does not make his decisions with consideration only for the present moment.

Also Zacchaeus came to the point where he realized for the first time that he had already been the recipient of God's love. Someone has described salvation by comparing it with the life that stirs in a flowering bush in the Spring. There it is, a thing which seems to be dead, and then life begins to stir in the roots, and new life pushes up through the trunk and into every twig. The buds begin to swell, and finally life bursts into bloom. The bush brings its testimony to the love and power of God. Of course, even though the bush seemed to be dead, the possibility of new life was already there waiting for the right combination of conditions for God to quicken it into new life. Genuine conversion is like that. It is not that we have been neglected by God and he suddenly bestows his blessings upon us. It is not that we pray down from heaven a miracle. Conversion means that we who have been unaware of God's love and goodness become aware of in every fibre of our being and this realization brings about a transformation of life.

Zacchaeus was completely changed when he became aware of God's love and forgiveness. The change was so complete that he was willing to try to make amends for every past misdeed. "If I have taken from any man wrongfully, I will restore to him four-fold." Jesus pronounced his benediction upon what had happened in Zacchaeus' life. He said, "This day has salvation come to this house." Jesus knew the hearts of men better than they knew themselves. He reminded us again and again that God judges us solely on the basis of our inward heart.

If someone had been standing nearby and heard Zacchaeus make his declaration they would probably have said, "I know that won't last! Give him a few days, and he will be back at his old tricks again." Such skepticism is more characteristic of our day than it was of Jesus' day. One of the lies which has common acceptance in our day is that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. How often have we heard someone say that? But the truth is that there is not a single intention on the road to hell. The road to good intentions leads upward, and not downward. If our intentions are sincere and genuine, God will accept us on the basis of them long before the world is likely to do so.

Any great experience with God must come from a sense of need, it has been said that God reaches us at the point of our greatest need. In other words when we become sick of life on the level of broken promises and sinful acts, so sick that we look upward to God alone for help, then will he be able to touch us. The story is often told of Sam Hadley's conversion. He was on the way to the river to throw himself in, convinced that there was no help for anyone who had been enslaved by drink as he had. On the way he passed Jerry McCauley's Mission. Jerry McCauley had himself been converted only after alcohol had gotten the better of him. As Sam Hadley stumbled into the mission that night he blurted out, "Pray for me, Jerry." But Jerry McCauley understood the problem of an alcoholic. He said in what must have seemed brutal fashion, "Pray for yourself, Sam!" To condense a rather long story, Sam was converted, and he himself started a mission work similar to Jerry McCauley's. Sam Hadley could not reach very far toward God that night. He had reached the lowest depths and God had to bend low to touch him, but when Sam Hadley made the first stumbling step toward God, he found him.

A poet of long ago said, "If with all your hearts, ye truly seek him, ye shall ever surely find him." If we really desire God with our whole hearts, he is ever near to give us the abundance of new life.

QUESTION: Where is the best place to locate a poultry house?

ANSWER: Locate poultry houses near the top of a southern or southeastern slope if possible. It's extremely important that poultry houses have good air and water drainage. Location should allow an abundance of controlled fresh air.

## Take your problems to Church this week — millions leave them there!

With the hope that it will, in some measure, foster and help sustain that which is good in family and community life, this feature is sponsored by the business firms and organizations whose names appear in the adjoining columns.

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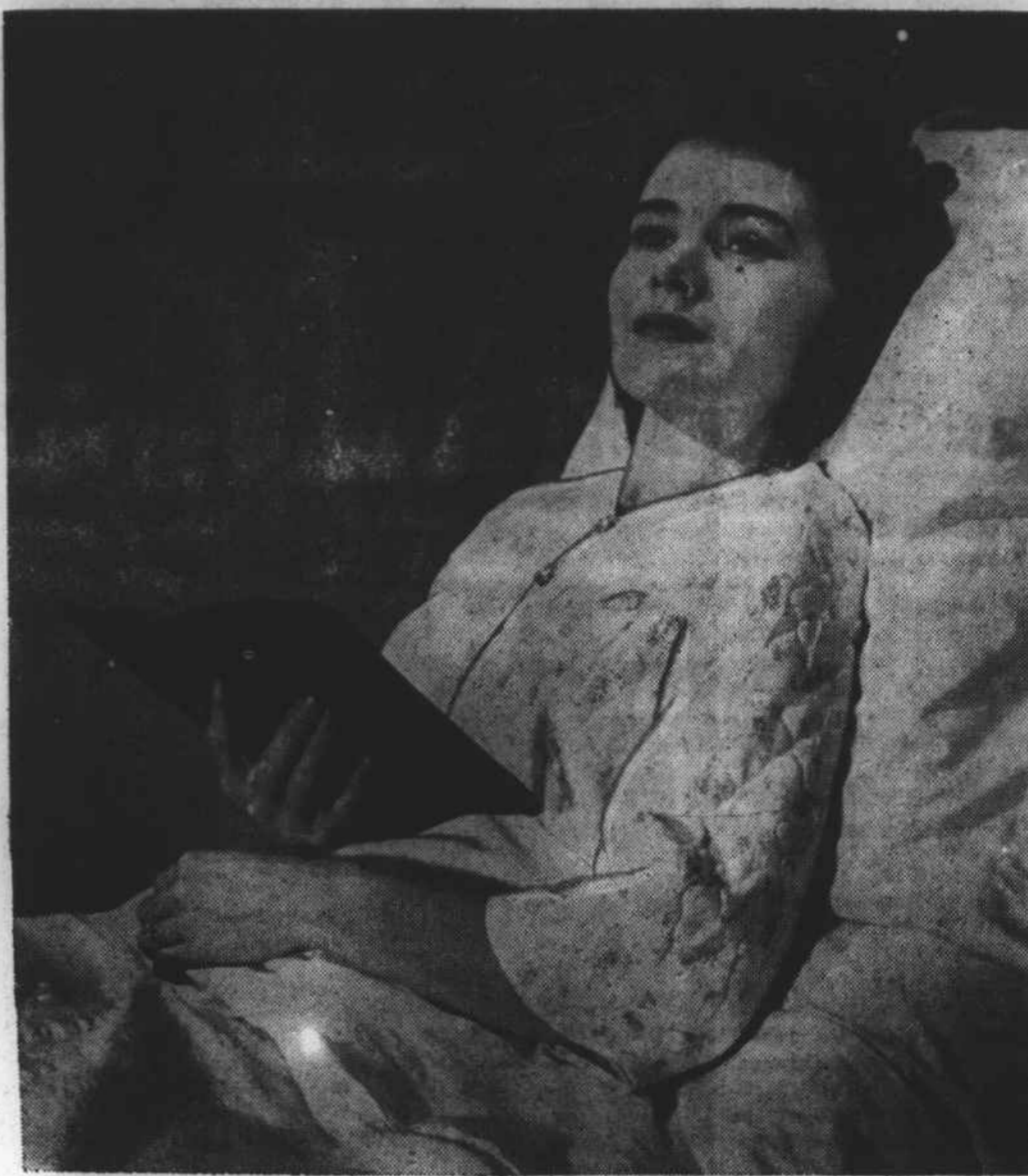
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### FAITH IS SOMETHING REAL

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."  
Psalm 121:1.

"Faith" a noted religious educator has said, "forms the axle of the universe." Certainly we depend upon faith as a principle of daily living. It is not just wishful thinking. We have faith that we will find the necessary food for our bodies when we go to the food store. We have faith that daylight will follow darkness. In other words faith is just as real as anything we can see, hear or feel. Some of us have more faith than others, hence the discovery of America and the electric light. Faith is a great bulwark in time of illness, a valuable asset to the invalid.

The Bible is a text book, or better still a prescription book, of faith. Passages such as the one quoted above show us the way. Attendance at church is another way to supply and to increase our faith. There are times in the lives of most of us when all is not smooth sailing. Learn to draw from these two wells of faith in stormy times. They have supplied others. They will supply you.

## Church Directory

### First Baptist Church

REV. J. ALTON MORRIS, Pastor.

Sunday School 9:45 A.M.  
Morning Worship 11:00 A.M.  
Training Union 6:30 P.M.  
Evening Services 7:30 P.M.  
Wednesday Night Hour of Power. 7:30 P.M.

### First Methodist Church

REV. R. T. HOUTS, Pastor

Sunday School 9:45 A.M.  
Morning Service 11 A.M.  
Youth Fellowship 6 P.M.  
Evening Service 7:30 P.M.  
Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 P.M.

### First Baptist Beal Town Mission

Services Every Sunday 9:45 A.M.

### First Presbyterian Church

REV. ROBERT POTTER, Pastor

Sunday School 9:45 A.M.  
Morning Worship 11:00 A.M.  
Evening Worship 7:30 P.M.  
Wednesday Night Services 7:30 P.M.

### Calvary Baptist Church

REV. RAYMOND CARROLL, Pastor

Services Every 2nd and 4th Sundays  
at 2:30 P.M.  
Wednesday Night Prayer Services at  
7:00 P.M.

### Free Methodist Church

REV. EARL NORRIS, Pastor

Sunday School 10 A.M.  
Morning Service 11:00 A.M.  
Evening Service 7:30 P.M.  
Young People's Service 2nd and 4th  
Sundays 6:45 P.M.  
Prayer Meeting, 7:30 P.M. Wednesday  
Thursday Night Community Prayer  
Service 7:30 P.M.

### Episcopal Church of the Messiah

REV. ALEX HANSON, Pastor

Sunday School 9:45 A.M.  
Morning Service 11 A.M.  
Daily Service 7:30 A.M.  
Evening Service 5:30 P.M.

### Church of God

REV. W. H. CROTTIS, Pastor

Sunday School 10:00 A.M.  
Morning Worship 11:00 A.M.  
Evening Service 7:30 P.M.  
Saturday Night Young People's  
Service 7:30 P.M.

### St. Williams Catholic Chapel

REV. JOSEPH DEAN

Sunday Morning Mass 8 A.M.  
Holy Days and First Fridays Mass  
8 P.M. Evenings

### ETHEL'S SHOP

119 Tennessee St.

### BRITAIN'S UPHOLSTERING SHOP

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