

The Day of Golden Opportunity by R.A. Torrey

"The Holy Spirit says, Today" — Hebrews 3:7

HE DAY OF GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY is today. Golden opportunities, opportunities of priceless worth, are open to every one of us today. But "tomorrow" has no sure promise for any one of us. "The Holy Spirit says, Today," and Conscience also cries, "Today," and the voice of Reason and the voice of History and the voice of Experience unite in one loud chorus and shout, "Today." Only the voices of indifference and laziness and folly murmur, "Tomorrow." The Holy Spirit is ever calling, "Today." Men in their folly are forever saying, "Tomorrow."

When the frightful plague of frogs came on Pharaoh of old and on his people, Pharaoh, in his terror, sent for Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD" (Exodus 8:8). Moses replied, "I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile." One would naturally suppose Pharaoh would have answered, "At once," but Pharaoh, like many another king, played the fool and answered, "Tomorrow" (Exodus 8:9, 10). Men show a similar folly and often a greater folly in these days. When urged to forsake sin with its miseries and degradation and perils and turn to Christ with the joy and peace, and elevation of our character and tranquility that He gives, they answer, "Yes, I think I will." "When?" "Oh, tomorrow." But "the Holy Spirit says, Today." A poor wretch came into my office one day. He had been drinking, and drinking had brought misery into his heart and ruin into his life. I asked, "Will you quit drinking and turn to Jesus Christ?" "Oh," he exclaimed, "there is nothing else that I can do, I will." "Will you do it now?" He hung his head, and murmured, "Not now, tomorrow." But "the Holy Spirit says, Today." Tomorrow is the devil's day and the fool's day. Today is God's day, and the wise man's day.

I wish to give you tonight some conclusive and unanswerable reasons why every man and woman in this auditorium who makes any pretensions to intelligence and common sense should not only accept the Lord Jesus as his Lord and Savior, but should accept Him here before he leaves this building tonight, if he has not already done it. What I want to get is action, immediate action, intelligent and wise action. And the only action that is intelligent and wise for anyone who has not already accepted Jesus Christ is to accept Him right here tonight. Resolutions to do the right thing and the wise thing at some indefinite time in the future are of no value

whatever. God's time is now. "The Holy Spirit says, Today."
Because the Lord Jesus Brings Peace to the Tormenting Conscience
The first reason why every man and woman in this auditorium who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him now is because the Lord Jesus brings peace to the tormenting conscience as soon as He is accepted, and the really wise man will not only desire that peace but desire it just as soon as he can get it. Wherever there is sin there will be an accusing conscience. And we "all have sinned."

If any man has sinned and his conscience does not accuse him and torment him he has sunk very low, very low. There are, of course, different degrees of torment of conscience and different kinds of torment of conscience. With some the pain is sharp and piercing, with some it is dull and grinding, but there is pain, there is unrest, there is no peace in the heart where sin has entered until that sin has been forgiven. But Jesus Christ gives peace to the most agonized conscience. Men and women have come to me in all degrees of misery over the memory of some sin they have committed, and I have pointed them to the Lord Jesus, and everyone who has really gone to Him has found rest. I could not tell how many men and women have come to me who were driven to the very verge of hopeless despair by the accusations of their conscience and were contemplating self-destruction in the hope of thus getting away from their mental agony. But I led them to Jesus Christ, and now they have rest and the peace of God that passes all understanding.

A young man came to me one Sunday morning in Chicago in awful agony. He had sinned grievously and was reaping the harvest. He was contemplating all sorts of sinful actions to escape the inevitable consequences of his sin. I pointed him to the Son of God and the young man accepted Him. Afterward he brought to me his companion in sin. She was fully determined to commit a very wicked and desperate action that was likely to land her in prison or in the cemetery. I pleaded with her and pointed her to the real cure, to the Savior. When she left me she was still undecided as to what she would do. She afterward decided and decided right. One night a long time afterward, as I was going down the back stairs of the Moody Church to the inquiry room, a young, happy-faced woman stopped me and said, "I want to thank you for what you did for me, and for my husband and for my child." I did not recognize her for a moment, and she said, "I am the young woman who came to you," and she explained the circumstances. It was the woman who had contemplated the destruction of her child, and her own destruction for time and for eternity. But she had found peace in Jesus Christ. Men and women with tormenting consciences, and with uneasy, restless hearts, there is rest for you in Jesus Christ. If you are wise you will not only find it, but you will find it now. "The Holy Spirit says, Today." You need not spend even one more day or one more hour in the agony of your accusing,

tormenting conscience.

BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST BRINGS INEXPRESSIBLE AND GLORIOUS JOY TO THOSE WHO ACCEPT HIM

The second reason why every man and woman who have not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him now is because Jesus Christ brings inexpressible and glorious joy, a joy to which the joy of this world is as nothing in comparison, to all as soon as they really accept and confess Him. Any really wise man will not only desire this joy but desire it at once. I for one not only wish the best I can get, but I wish it as quickly as I can get it. The joy that is in Jesus Christ is the very best joy one can get. There is not a particle of doubt about that. Ask anyone who has ever tried the world and has then really tried Jesus Christ. You cannot find one single man or woman who has really tried the joy that there is in Christ, anyone who has really put his trust in Him as his personal Savior and unreservedly surrendered to Him as his Lord and Master, who will not tell you that the world has no joy for a moment comparable with that joy which is found in Jesus Christ. No matter how rare their opportunities may have been for enjoying the world, they will tell you without the slightest hesitation that the joy that one finds in Christ is incomparably greater and finer and more satisfying than any joy the world can give. There are millions of witnesses to this fact, and their testimony is absolutely unanimous.

I know the joy that comes from wealth, I know the joy that comes from the theater, I know the joy that comes from the dance, from the card table, and the joy that comes from the race track, and the joy that comes from the wine supper, and so on down to the end of the catalog of this world's joys. I know also the joy that comes from literature and from art, the joy that comes from music, from science, from philosophy and from travel. I know practically every joy that this world has to give, but I say to you that the joy of all these put together is nothing to the inexpressible and glorious joy that comes from a genuine acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior, and a wholehearted surrender to Him as our Lord, and a constant and open confession of Him before the world, and from receiving the Holy Spirit whom He gives to those who do thus accept Him and fully surrender to Him and confess Him. Men and women, if you wish the highest, deepest, purest, and most abounding joy, immeasurably the most satisfying joy that is to be known, not only in the life which is to come, but in the life which now is, not only come to Jesus Christ but come now. "The Holy Spirit says, Today."

BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST BRINGS DELIVERANCE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

The third reason why every man and woman in this auditorium who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him tonight is because Jesus Christ brings deliverance from the power of sin, and any wise man or woman not only wishes deliverance from the power of sin but wishes it as soon as he or she can get it. There is no other form of slavery known to man so degrading and so wretched as the slavery of sin. Better far be the poor black slave of the most brutal slave driver the South ever knew than to be the slave of rum, or the slave of lust, or the slave of bad temper, or the slave of drugs, or the slave of an impure imagination, or the slave of greed for gold, or the slave of any other form of sin. Poor old Uncle Tom, groaning in his cabin after the cruel blows of the brutal master, is not so pitiable an object as the wretch, poor or rich, who is under the whip of appetite or of lust or of drugs or of any other sin. But there is freedom right at hand, right now. Jesus Christ sets men free from sin in all its forms. He sets free men who have been slaves for years. He sets them free in a moment. Any sinner can find deliverance in Christ from any sin, can find it now. What Jesus said when He was here on earth is just as true today. "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). But, thank God, it is also as true today as when He said it that, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Any man or woman who has a spark of intelligence left will not only wish deliverance from sin and its awful bondage, but wish it at once.

What would you have thought of any old time black slave of a vile and cruel master who had been offered freedom and answered, "Yes, I wish liberty. My bondage has been awful. But I don't want the freedom just yet. I will wait until next year. I will wait until next month. I will wait until next week. I will wait until tomorrow." You would exclaim, "What a fool!" But he would not be so colossal a fool as you are when you say, "Yes, I do wish deliverance from the power of sin," and then add, "but not tonight-tomorrow." Oh, men, listen, "The Holy Spirit says, Today."

BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST BRINGS BEAUTY OF CHARACTER

The fourth reason why every man and woman who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him tonight is because Jesus Christ brings beauty of character, and every wise man and woman will not only desire beauty of character, but desire it just as soon as they can get it. I sometimes notice advertisements in the papers that read, "The Secret of Beauty." I can tell you the secret of beauty, men and women, the secret of permanent, indestructible beauty. It is

Jesus Christ in the heart. He not only beautifies the face, He beautifies the soul. He makes over the soul that trusts in Him into His own glorious likeness. I have seen some of the foulest men and women I ever knew made over into the fairest, and it was Jesus Christ who did it.

Sam Hadley of the Water Street Mission, New York, was the friend of all men who were down and out. He was always on the lookout for an opportunity to help some man who was about as bad as they make them onto his feet, and to lead him to Christ and to thus get the man saved. A man said to Mr. Hadley one day, "I have a friend whom I wish you would take an interest in." Sam Hadley asked, "Who is he?" "He is Bowery Ike." "Well," said Hadley, "what is he, anyhow?" The man replied, "He is a crook. He makes his living by stealing and picking pockets and all that sort of thing. Presently he is on Blackwell's Island, serving a term there. You can find him more easily now than usual." Sam Hadley went over to Blackwell's Island and looked up Bowery Ike, and found him; for he could not get away, he was behind bars. Bowery Ike had no use for Sam Hadley, except that when he got out he came around to Sam to get a little money to get a new suit of clothes. But he was soon off to the Island again. Every time he would come out of confinement he would go around to see Hadley, but as soon as he got on his feet again he would go back to his crooked work.

Sam Hadley followed Bowery Ike for seven long years, and one day at the end of the seventh year Bowery Ike was thoroughly sick and tired of sin, and this time not only came to Sam Hadley, but came to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ opened His arms and took Bowery Ike in. After Bowery Ike had been saved about a year, Sam wrote me, saying, "Mr. Torrey, I have a man who wants to study at your school. They used to call him Bowery Ike. His right name is Ira Snyder. We believe in him. He has been a tough customer. He has been a hard case. But he is saved and we believe God wants to use him. Will you take him?" "Dear Sam," I replied, "I will take anybody you recommend." He wrote back, "I recommend him." Then I wrote, "Send him on." And Bowery Ike (Ira Snyder) came. Listen, men, though that man had been a crook from his boyhood, for he commenced picking pockets when a little lad; though he had been a crook nearly all his life, he became one of the most beautiful Christians I have ever met in all my life. And I say I have known thieves who have come to Christ, burglars who have come to Christ, train robbers and bank robbers who have come to Christ; I have known harlots, and murderers and people guilty of every kind of crime I ever heard of, who have come to Christ and have become some of the loveliest Christians I have ever known. Yes, some of the men and women who were once down in the deepest depths of sin.

But to come back to Ira Snyder, Bowery Ike. He came on to Chicago. He stayed with us about a year, a little over a year. One night he said to me, "I want to walk home with you and have a little talk with you." On the way to my home he said, "I made a little visit down in New York a few weeks ago. I think they need me in New York. I have loved it in Chicago, I would like to stay on, but I believe they need me in New York. I have written Mr. Hadley that I am ready to go back to New York and help in the work." A few days after this Ira Snyder was taken down with influenza, a slight attack, not a very serious case, but he went to bed with it. They did not think he was very ill. But as I was leaving the dining table one night the maid told me that Mr. Hunter, who was one of my assistants there at that time, as he is now here, wished to see me. I met Mr. Hunter and he said, "Mr. Torrey, Ira Snyder is dead." I said, "What, John? You don't mean Ira Snyder?" We had another man at the Institute at the same time whose name was much the same, and who was very ill at that time, too, and I thought Mr. Hunter must mean him. "You don't mean Ira Snyder?" I said. "You must mean So-and-So," naming the other man. "No," Mr. Hunter said. "Mr. Torrey, Ira Snyder is dead. He died very suddenly." I asked, "Where is he, John?" "He is over at the undertaker's. They have prepared him for his burial and have placed him in his coffin. They are going to have the services tomorrow, and I thought I should come to tell you tonight." "That was right, John," I replied, "let us go over." We went to the undertaker's, which was not far away, and walked into the parlors. And there in a beautiful coffin lay Ira Snyder. When I looked down into that face, one of the noblest faces I have ever looked into in my life, I will tell you what I did, I could not help it, I broke down, and, leaning over, I kissed Ira Snyder's beautiful face as he lay there in his coffin. Yes, friends, Bowery Ike had been a crook before he became a Christian, but by the power of Jesus Christ in his heart he became one of the loveliest Christians I ever knew in my life. I don't think my heart ever ached over anybody outside my own family as it did over Ira Snyder, who was formerly a pickpocket, a burglar, and everything that was bad, but who in his lost and ruined condition came to Jesus, and the heart of Jesus was big enough to take him in, and Jesus came into his heart and transformed him into His own likeness. The Lord Jesus is doing that sort of thing every day.

And the Lord Jesus is also taking others who are not so foul, who, indeed, the world thinks good, and He is making them immeasurably better. It is Jesus and Jesus only who makes truly lovely characters. Yes, men and women, do you not wish to be good? Not only good in the eyes of man, but good in the eyes of God? You may be. It is Jesus' work to make you so. Let Him begin it at once. Let Him begin it now, "The Holy Spirit says, Today." What do you say? "Tomorrow?" No, not if you have a particle of sense left, and I believe you have. You will say,

"Tonight. Right now."

BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST FILLS OUR LIVES WITH HIGHEST USEFULNESS

The fifth reason why every man and woman who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him now is because Jesus Christ fills our lives with highest usefulness; and every wise man and every wise woman desires not only to be useful but desires to begin being useful as soon as possible. The Christian life is the only really useful life. We look at the life of many a one who is not a Christian, and say, "There is a useful life"; but God looks at it and looks through it, looks at it in all its directions, and writes this verdict on it, "Useless." Whether you and I see it or not, the man or woman who is not with Christ is against Him (Matthew 12:30), and the man who is against Jesus Christ is against God and against humanity. His life is useless and worse than useless. But the life that is fully surrendered to Jesus Christ becomes at once a useful life. It may be the mere wreck of a life, but it becomes at once a useful life.

A friend of mine found one of the most hopeless wrecks of womanhood in New York City and brought her to Jesus Christ. I think this poor creature lived less than two years after her conversion and many months of that time were spent on a sick bed. But that woman was used to the eternal salvation of more than a hundred persons while she lay there dying, and the story of the transformed life of "the Bluebird of Mulberry Bend" has gone around the world and saved thousands. Come to Christ. Really come to Him. He will make you useful. Come at once, that your usefulness may begin at once. I am glad I came to the Lord Jesus when I did, but oh! if only I had come sooner. How many precious years were wasted! How many golden opportunities were lost, opportunities that will never return! Come, men and women. Come now. "The Holy Spirit says, Today."

BECAUSE THE SOONER WE COME TO CHRIST, THE FULLER AND RICHER WILL BE OUR ETERNITY

The sixth reason why every man and woman in this auditorium who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him tonight is because the sooner we come to Christ, the fuller and richer will be our eternity. The eternity of each one of us will be just what we make it in the life that now is. You are constructing your eternity every day. Every day of true service for Christ makes our reward so much the greater and our eternity so much the fuller and richer. Come to Christ next Sunday and you will be behind for all eternity by as much as you might have accomplished this week. You may cry in coming years,

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"Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight," but Time will not turn backward in its flight. Time cannot turn backward. Time is flying by every moment and never returns. Today is hurrying by us at express speed. Tomorrow will soon follow. And as I turn around and peer after Yesterday and Today as they plunge into the unfathomable depths of the Past, I cry, "Yesterday, where are you?" Out from the fathomless abyss of bygone days comes the answer, "Gone forever." And I hear the Holy Spirit crying, "Today! Today! Today!" "The Holy Spirit says, Today."

BECAUSE IF WE DO NOT COME TO JESUS CHRIST TODAY WE MAY NEVER COME AT ALL

I will give you one more reason why every man and woman who has not already accepted Jesus Christ should not only accept Him but accept Him at once, and that is because if we do not come to Jesus Christ today we may never come at all. That is not at all a remote possibility.

Thousands and tens of thousands have been as near to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as you are this moment and have said, "Not tonight," and now they have passed without Christ into that world in which there is no hope for repentance, no matter how "diligently with tears" they may seek it, into that world in which there is no opportunity to change their mind or their eternal destiny.

A man came into one of our tents one night in Chicago. It was the first time he had ever been in a meeting of that kind in his life. The words of Mr. Schiverea, who spoke that night, made a deep impression on him, and after the meeting was over he lingered with a friend and talked personally with Mr. Schiverea. His friend accepted Christ and he was on the very verge of accepting Him. Mr. Schiverea said to him, "Will you accept Jesus Christ right now?" "No," the man said, "this is the first time in my life that I was ever in a meeting of this kind. I cannot decide tonight, but I promise you that I will come back Sunday night and accept Christ." It was Friday night and there was to be no meeting on Saturday. Mr. Schiverea replied that he did not question at all the honesty of the man's intention or the sincerity of his promise to return Sunday night and settle it; but added, "We have no guarantee whatever that you will live until Sunday night." "Oh," the man said, with a laugh, "you don't suppose that God is going to cut me off after the first meeting of this kind that I ever attended in my life and not give me another opportunity?" Mr. Schiverea replied, "I do not know. But I do know you are taking a great risk in waiting until Sunday night. I greatly fear that if you do not accept Jesus Christ now you will never accept Him and be lost forever." "No," the man said, "I give you my word that I will be back here Sunday night and accept Christ." Mr. Schiverea continued to plead with him, but the man would not yield. He went out of the tent with his friend. They got into a carriage and turned toward

home. And as they drove up the street they passed a saloon. The man said to his friend, "Let's stop and have one more drink and then we will both stop drinking permanently." "No," said his friend, "I have settled it already. I have accepted Christ and I will never take another drink." "Well," said the other, "I'm going to have one more drink, anyhow. You drive up the street and then come back for me and I will be waiting for you outside." He entered the saloon. His friend drove up the street, and after a few minutes returned to pick up the man. He was nowhere to be seen. The friend went into the saloon to look for him. He was not there.

The friend went into the street again and looked up and down it for the man, but he was nowhere in sight. Passing a high board fence, he heard a groan, and passing swiftly around behind it, he discovered his friend lying behind it stabbed, with an awful gash in his body, unconscious and dying. He was taken to the Presbyterian Hospital and lived until Monday morning, but never regained consciousness and passed into eternity unsaved, lost forever. Why? Because when "the Holy Spirit said, Today," the man said, "Tomorrow." So he passed unprepared into the presence of God, and so will some of you if you do not listen to the Holy Spirit now as He says, "Today."

One night when I was preaching in Bradford, England, a man and his wife sat side by side in the meeting and were deeply moved, but they made no decision. As they walked away from the meeting the wife said to her husband, "Would it not have been nice if you and I both had accepted Christ?" He answered, "Yes, it would." They reached home and retired. About two o'clock the following morning his wife awakened him and said, "I feel so strange." In a few minutes from that time she had passed into eternity. After he had laid his wife's body away in the cemetery, he came back to the meeting and told us this story and accepted Christ, but he came alone. Oh, men and women, listen! Do you not hear the Holy Spirit crying, "Today"?

There are so many things besides death that may make this the last opportunity you will ever have and make a refusal now final and fatal. Loss of opportunity may come. The Holy Spirit is here in power now. It is a great opportunity, the Day of Golden Opportunity. A like opportunity may never come again. It never will come again for some of you. "The Holy Spirit says, Today."

A hardened heart may seal your doom. When a human heart is moved on by the Spirit of God, as some of your hearts are, and the heart continues to resist the Holy Spirit, it is likely to become very soon hardened and hopeless.

One night in our church in Chicago, after the meeting in which many had accepted Christ, I remained talking with a young man. He was under deep

conviction, within one step of a decision. I urged on him an immediate acceptance and confession of Christ. "No," he said, "I cannot do it tonight. But I will give you my word of honor that I will come back tomorrow night and do it." I told him I did not question his word or his intention; but I said, "I have no guarantee whatever that you will keep your word. I have a feeling in my heart that if you do not settle it tonight you will never come back." "Why," he replied, "my mother is here every night. We live within a block of this place. I give you my word of honor I will come tomorrow night and settle it." Again I said, "I do question your word, but the Spirit of God is working mightily with you tonight, and if you go out of here resisting the Spirit of God, I believe your heart will be so hardened that your eternal destiny will be sealed and you will never come back." "No," he said, "I cannot accept tonight, but I will come tomorrow night and settle it." He walked away. I watched him with a heavy heart as he passed out of the door. I said to myself, "He will never come back," and he never did. Quite a while later I asked his mother about him and she told me he had never come back into the church from that night.

Men and women, listen! You cannot trifle with God, and you cannot trifle with your own souls, and you cannot trifle with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only saying in our text, but He is saying in your hearts, "Today! Accept Christ right now." Will you listen to the mighty, gracious Spirit of God? Will you do as He bids you? Will you listen right now and harden not your heart, but accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, surrender to Him as your Lord and Master, and begin to confess to Him as such before the world, and be saved, and get right here and now the wonderful blessings that He gives and that He alone can give?