

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

From Verbatim Reports by our own Phonographer, and those of the New York Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Boston Journal and Boston Globe.

ALSO THE LIVES OF

D. L. MOODY, I. D. SANKEY, P. P. BLISS, REV. JOSEPH COOK,
AND FRANCES E. WILLARD.

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OBSTACLES.

Jesus said, "Take ye *away* the stone."—JOHN 11:39.

I want to call your attention for a few minutes this morning to a verse you have heard read in the 11th chapter of the Gospel according to John—a part of the 39th verse: "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." Now I have not any doubt but nearly all this congregation are looking for a blessing in Chicago. I've no doubt that hundreds of you are expecting a great work here. If you are not so expecting, you ought to be; and if God does not do a great and mighty work here, it will not be his fault, but it will be our own. I find a class of people who say, Well, we must wait until God works, and when God is ready, we will see a great work. Now, if I read my Bible and understand Scripture, God is always ready. We talk about the "set time" for God to favor us. The set time is when you and I get ready to let God work for us, just when we choose to roll away the stones that prevent his coming to our souls. Some one must take away these stones, some one must roll them off, so the Lord, Redeemer, and Savior can get at us. There is no doubt but that He himself could send down legions of angels to clear away every single stone. If even the word of his mouth should go out, every stone-like obstacle in his path would suddenly disappear, just as Satan did from his presence in the wilderness. But God does not work in that way. He works through others. He did not himself roll away the stone from Lazarus' grave; he said to his disciples surrounding him, and to his disciples in all times, "Take ye away the stone." Now I find a great many men, and a great many wives, and a great many Christians, too, who ask God to roll away the stone; and because he does not answer their prayer, they throw the blame on God. Why, the blame is not his; it is theirs. God always works in partnership. When he is asked to do a thing, he can only do it when he first sees an active disposition in the asker to help to get the blessing. This failure to second God's work for us comes from unbelief. Such a half-hearted man does not believe God will grant his prayer, and so fails to carry out his own part of the programme. The mother that prays for the reclaiming of a drunken son, or a dissolute husband, must faithfully do her part to this end, and then must have full belief that God will do the rest. There is something for us all to do for our fellow creatures, and it is the stone of unbelief that blocks up the way, if we do not do it. And it is just this great stone that must first be rolled out of the way, in this city. Let us believe that God can do a great work here; and that practical belief will make us work as we ought to. It will be a hard work, but with this lever of faith it can be done, and in short order. There must be honest work, a lifting up of one's self first as far as may be, and then a leaving of the rest to God, whose word will completely roll the stone away and raise the dead. And what a need

there is for this resurrection in all our souls. How dead our sense of sin! How forgetful that iniquity cannot live in our heart and word and act! How careless and indifferent even to have things anywise different than they are! Is the fault God's? No; the only trouble is with ourselves; we will not ask him that he will help us to do better things. We do not want to do them. How lukewarm the love of God in our hearts, and how selfish and cold, in consequence, our thoughts toward our neighbor! It is a wonder to me how long our standard can fly, and yet we can profess to be Christians. Do we not need to cry that God will revive us? Yes; it is we ourselves that must first be quickened! Our own hearts—those of us who profess to be Christians—must feel anew the joys of sins forgiven, and a re-kindling of the early fires of faith and holy living. Only thus can good influences be made effectual on those outside. I have heard many complain of the answer of prayer being withheld, when the secret lay just here. A woman, though a professing Christian, need not pray for her husband's conversion if she be governed by an evil temper. She need not talk, even to God, about her husband until she gets command of her railing tongue and wicked looks. If you are not Christ-like in your behavior, you need not expect to be taken for an example by your godless neighbor. He will not imitate you, even if he does not despise you for your hollow professions. I recall an illustration used by my dear friend Morehouse, when he was in this city. The Apostle Paul stood with the gathering crowd about the fire, warming himself after the shipwreck, when, as they piled the wood on the fire, a viper sprang from the flame and fastened itself on his hand. Immediately the gaping crowd cried out that he was a reprobate, whom, though he had escaped the waves, vengeance would not let live. But presently Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire, when they, seeing he did not die, changed their opinion entirely, and Paul preached to them the saving word of life. The apostle shook off the viper, and the confidence of men flowed out to him. Let us Christians all imitate this grand example; let us shake off, with God's help, the vipers of evil temper, and all the evil things that make our Christianity a nullity, and too often a reproach in the eyes of those we would call to a like name and inheritance with ourselves. And, as a community as well, we must shake off the venomous beast, whose poison not only repels others, but kills and enfeebles ourselves.

The vipers of London are different from those of New York; and, again, our own are unlike either of these. Covetousness, the inordinate greed for gain, has fastened on the hand of Chicago, along with many another Western city; and the sting will be worse and worse unless a remedy is found for us. We talk with an appetite much too keen about getting gain and the chances of money-making. And yet this very trait, confessedly an evil, is an argument to our hand. There is a cry in commercial circles, loud and prolonged, for a revival in business—all classes of business. In this country, during the past

twenty years, I never heard any one crying out against it. But if you talk about getting a revival in God's business, there is a class of people who at once shake their heads. They do not know about it; they are afraid it won't work. A strange inconsistency; a thing is all right in their own concerns, but all wrong in God's. The two things are not different at all, for the purposes of this comparison. God's work, like man's work, may have stages of activity; and the Christian just as much as the merchant, should seek earnestly for a revival in trade. Oh, let us roll away this stone of unbelief and indifference, and we will soon hear a voice from the place of the stone crying, "Lazarus, come forth." Let us only cry as earnestly and loud for a revival as our business men have done and are now doing; and the powers and affections of our souls will spring up and bloom to eternal life. Our quickened souls and those of our friends will be made glad thereat, and rejoice together in time and eternity. Should no right time come in God's fields, when can the farmer have his harvest time? How active the farmers are in getting hands to help them through the rush. The right time does come periodically in the kingdom of heaven upon earth—a ripening time, when God calls his reapers to put in their sickles.

The three stones I will especially refer to this morning, or mountains, if you prefer—for that is what they are—to be rolled from our caves before the dead Lazarus, quickened to life, can come forth. A great stone to be rolled away is unbelief, already spoken of. If I ask the Christian man in Chicago, Do you believe God can revive this work? I do not want him to say: "I do not believe he can; I have been here about fifteen years, and during all that time there has not been a successful attempt at reviving his work." Well, it may be so that the work has not got on well. What was the trouble? Well, I believe it was simply because people did not believe the work could really be done. But surely there is no person in the town but knows that everything is possible with God. Let us take this stand, to believe that God is actually going to do something. There is no drunkard who should despair, for I believe that God is going to save hundreds of them. He can and he will destroy his love of strong drink, root and branch, and I believe there is to be a cleansing thunderstorm in this atmosphere here before many days.

When in Glasgow, a skeptic insisted that all my converts were women and old men verging on the grave. At the next meeting in that city there were present in the hall thirty-three hundred men, and of these twenty-seven hundred were young men. The skeptic next insisted that not a wild or reckless or drunken man came under God's reviving influence. At the next meeting a gambler, and a short time afterwards the most notorious drunkard in town, experienced saving grace. And so let it be here. We want to see thieves, gamblers, and harlots saved. Let us have faith, for according to our faith shall it be done to us; just as Martha saw Lazarus alive through trust in Jesus' words.

If we believe, we are told that we may order mountains to be removed and they will be cast into the sea. Oh, may God strike down our unbelief, to the resurrection to life of even the vilest sinners in this city.

The next terrible stone to be rolled away is prejudice. Oh, how came that in among the churches against revivals? How many men you hear say: "Well, I am prejudiced against revivals. I do not believe in them." They believe in revivals in everything else. They say: "Agitate politics and trade, and let us have a revival in everything else but religion." So, many whom I have addressed here on this subject have inveighed against revivals in religion, shaking their heads and saying no good can come out of revivals. Well, my dear friends, when Philip, the sage deacon, went to Nathaniel to tell him about Jesus, and Nathaniel objected, could any good come out of Nazareth, he just answered, "Come and see." So I answer you, Come and see. Spend a week waiting on God, and see if the work is not to be a power of God to the saving of many. "Oh," but some one may say, "I cannot countenance these unhealthy excitements. I know far too much bad about them for that." My friend, I know far more of the possible evils you would shun, and know them to be sometimes real ones; but what of it? Because some revivals turn out to be useless, or in some developments positively bad, must the system be thrown aside? No. The Democrat does not desert his politics for some minor flaw about them; and the Republican does not either, if some of his standard-bearers have done corruptly. Professional and business men are not degraded by the shortcomings of individuals, and all through and through there is seen to be no limit in this principle. God's mighty engine in revivals is not to be thrown aside for even considerable defects. Under its operations time was when 3,000 men were added to the church in one day. We cannot speak against these special meetings, finally, for they are planned in Scripture. The Bible is full of chronicles of their workings. They are developments of the Christian idea, no innovation whatever, and the best possible agencies for work for sinners, which is work for God.

And then this miserable sectarian spirit that once held despotic hold on men. There was a time when its grasp was that of iron; but, blessed be God, the time is past. I remember, fifteen years ago, the Methodist insisted that he was a Methodist, although lending a hand to the revival then in progress; the Congregationalist was nothing else, through and through, though, he, too, co-operated in the good work; and the Presbyterian and the Baptist, and all, were first of all their denominational selves, though condescending for a few days to work in yoke in a common cause. Yet it was really and necessarily condescension; and there was enough of it in those meetings to kill them, and it nearly did it. And this sectarian stone is a real stone, though nothing like the boulder it used to be. The rolling-away process must be pushed vigorously; let us heave it away altogether out of sight. Let us have none of that

spirit in this meeting. Talk not of this sect and that sect, this party and that party; but solely and exclusively of the great, comprehensive cause of Jesus Christ. When Christ came into the world, had he allied himself with the Sadducees, they would have warmly upheld him, if he had joined the Pharisees, they would not have let him be crucified; but he kept clear of them; and just so we should do in this glorious work opening before us. In this ideal brotherhood there should be one faith, one mind, one spirit; and in this city let us starve it out for a season, to actualize this glorious truth. You remember how, in the Old Testament, Eldad and Medad took upon themselves priestly duties, and how excited for once in his life Joshua became at the irregularity, and ran and told the scandal to Moses; but you also remember how Moses reproved his informant, who was then engaged in perhaps the only small business of his life, and told him to rebuke them not: they prophesied well, however irregularly. It was just so with Christ; when word was carried by over-serviceable followers that men were casting out devils, who "were not of us," he rebuked, not those who were thus benefiting their kind, but the talebearers. Oh, yes; let us sink this party feeling and contend for Christ only. Oh that God may so fill us with his love and the love of souls, that no thought of minor sectarian parties can come in; that there may be no room for them in our atmosphere whatever; and that the Spirit of God may give us one mind and one spirit here to glorify his holy name.