

Lessons from  
the Life and Death of  
D. L. MOODY

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“By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”— Cor, xv. 10.

THIS passage of Scripture sums up the life of the Apostle Paul in a single sentence. It also sums up, describes, explains and interprets the life of D. L. Moody. Mr. Moody differed in many notable respects from any other man of the century. This verse explains wherein he differed and why he differed. He has labored more than we all, and accomplished more than we all; but it was altogether the grace of God that made him to differ. The grace of God bestowed upon him “was not in vain.” He let grace have its perfect work. The grace bestowed upon us is often in vain. We will not accept it in its fullness and let it work out its glorious consummation.

The life and death of Mr. Moody are full of lessons. Lessons that it would take volumes to fully recount. We must confine ourselves to some of those that are most striking and fundamental.

1. The first lesson is the great possibilities that are open through the grace of God, to a poor, uneducated, and spiritually unpromising boy. His parents were poor; his father a country stone mason with seven children. All his property consisted of a plain little house, with one or two acres of poor land, and this mortgaged. When the oldest child was but thirteen and Dwight only four, the father suddenly died. The widow was left with seven children to support, and the mortgaged home. A month after the father’s death, two more children were born. It was a life of hard toil and little promise that D. L. Moody faced from early boyhood. He had meagre opportunities for education, and did not take to what little he had. Furthermore he was not a spiritually-minded boy. When he offered himself for church membership in Boston at eighteen years of age, he was refused immediate admission to the church. The pastor and church have been criticised and laughed at for this, but the pastor and church were right, for he knew so little about salvation, that when the question was put to him “What has Christ done for us all, for you, which entitles Him to our love,” his reply was “I do not know. I think Christ has done a good deal for us, but I do not think of anything particular as I know of.” But the church, while holding him back, did not cast him off nor neglect him. It appointed a committee of two to watch over him with kindness and teach him the way of God more perfectly.

But this poor boy, poorly educated, poor in spiritual promise, became the mightiest religious leader of the century; and I think it may be added the greatest man of the century; for when the fame and influence of our great generals, great statesmen, great authors, and great scholars have been forgotten, his fame and influence, and thank God his influence more than his fame, will not be forgotten, but will live on.

2. The second lesson is the importance of personal work. Young Moody was not converted by a great sermon, but by the quiet personal work of a layman—his Sunday-school teacher. Have many sermons been preached in this century that have wrought so much, if we look at ultimate results, as the personal dealing of this Sunday-school teacher? Let Sunday-school teachers take courage.

The importance of personal work is taught not only by Mr. Moody's conversion, but also by his life work. It was by untiring effort as a personal worker, on the street, in the store, in hotels, in saloons, on the cars, everywhere, that Mr. Moody learned to be a mighty worker for Christ.

3. The third lesson that we should learn from the life of Mr. Moody is the power of persistence. As we have already seen, Mr. Moody had little promise when he started, but he had one thing that always has large promise in it. He had the habit of keeping at anything he undertook, until he accomplished it. Nothing ever discouraged him. At the outset everything was against him as a public speaker. His grammar was very bad; his sentences were hard to understand. He had not much to say that was worth listening to. But he was sure that God had called him to speak, and so, though people of good sense advised him to keep still, he kept on talking until he could get more hearers, and more deeply interested hearers, and more responsive hearers than any man of his day. During the last meetings of his life, he spoke to an audience of 12,000 people, and many thousands were turned away who could not get in. In the truest sense, he was without question the greatest orator of our day.

His persistence was shown also in his getting a place for himself in Sunday-school work. He was not wanted; but he kept pegging away, until he not only had a great Sunday-school himself, but largely revolutionized the Sunday-school methods of the world.

He had hard work to get recognition among Christians. He was at one period called "crazy Moody," later he was the target of the most bare-faced and outrageous falsehood. The first thing I ever heard about Mr. Moody was a lie, which I took for granted was true. When he began his great work in London, it was reported that he and Sankey were sent there by a firm of organ makers at a salary of five hundred pounds per year. One of the leading dailies in New York

City stated in an editorial, June 22d, 1875: "We are credibly informed that Messrs. Moody and Sankey were sent to England by Mr. Barnum as a matter of speculation." This lying never stopped. A number of falsehoods have appeared in religious and secular papers within a year. Some of them since his death; of his great wealth, and of the pecuniary demands he made wherever he held meetings. I know from positive personal knowledge, these statements to be absolutely false. But in spite of all this opposition and falsehood, Mr. Moody went right on to the goal without being embittered. He said to me one day last summer, "We will let others do the talking and try and keep right with God and go ahead."

4. The fourth lesson from Mr. Moody's life is the power of a consuming passion for souls. Very soon after his conversion, Mr. Moody became burdened for the salvation of others, and in season and out of season, gave himself up to the work of bringing men to Christ. He would speak to them in all sorts of places and at all hours of the day and night about their soul's interest. He was often reproached for his indiscretion in this matter, but not infrequently in the very case where he was told that he had done more harm than good, those spoken to afterward accepted Christ, and dated their conviction to Mr. Moody's unseasonable importunities. He was at it and always at it. He could not pass a crowd of men without wishing to preach to them the gospel. Riding through a dense crowd with him in Chicago when the mayor, Carter Harrison, lay in state in the Court House, he turned suddenly to me and said, "Torrey, this will not do, we must preach to these men." One of the opera houses across the way was immediately secured, and all-day meetings began.

Whoever came to speak to him in his office, reporters, and strangers of all kinds, were pretty sure to be approached on the subject of their soul's salvation before he got through with them.

There is nothing that has so stirred my heart in reviewing the facts of his life, and brought to me such condemnation for neglect of opportunities, as this constant overwhelming burden for souls that always possessed Mr. Moody.

5. The fifth great lesson taught by his life, is the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit was illustrated in many ways in his life.

(1) The power of the Holy Spirit was shown in his conversion. Mr. Moody did not take naturally to religious things or to orthodoxy. He went to an orthodox Sunday-school and church because his uncle demanded it as a condition of giving him a position. He disliked the church and disliked the school. But at last the Holy Spirit began to work in his heart. How thorough was his conversion, though it was slow. Whoever had an intenser and deeper love for the Sunday-

school and for the church than he came to have? It was the Holy Spirit who wrought the change. His Sunday-school teacher and Rev. Dr. Edward N. Kirk were only instruments whom the Holy Spirit used.

(2) The power of the Holy Spirit was shown again in the transformation of his character, and in its development into its present strength and beauty. Many chapters could be written on Mr. Moody's singular tender-heartedness, abounding sympathy, unconquerable charity, almost matchless humility, undaunted courage, absolute freedom from the love of money and the praise of men. Intense hatred of sham, consideration for his fellow-men, consuming passion for souls, overflowing joyfulness and hope, and all the other elements of strength and beauty in his many-sided character. None of these things were natural to Mr. Moody; they were all the Holy Spirit's work. They were the work of Him whose fruit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

(3) The power of the Spirit was seen again in the Spiritual illumination that came to him. We have seen that Mr. Moody was not naturally bright, but very dull in his spiritual perceptions; but to what a clearness and depth of spiritual perception he attained. It was wonderful. Oftentimes has he taken us all with him as he described the beauties and wonders and glories that he saw in the Word of God and in the Christ. It was the Holy Spirit that taught him these things,—the same Holy Spirit who is willing to be your teacher and mine.

(4) The power of the Spirit was seen again in his effective service. "What is the secret of that man's success," many have asked me. One of the easiest questions that could be asked. He had power. But where did he get that strange power by which he swayed the affections and wills of men? He knew, and we may all know. It was the Holy Ghost upon him. It was Christ's own promise realized,—"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (Acts i. 18.) Mr. Moody did not always have that power. It came at a definite time in his life and in a definite way. Two women came to him and said, "We are praying for you." He was a little vexed, and asked why they were praying for him, why they did not pray for the unsaved. They replied—"we are praying that you may have the power." These words sank deep into his heart, and there came a time when God interpreted the message. He went to these women to pray with him and fairly rolled on the floor in an agony of desire and prayer. Then he went alone with God, and shut himself in to wait upon God, and after a very definite experience with the Holy Spirit, he entered into the life of power. When you and I have listened to his words, oftentimes they have seemed quite ordinary, yet they have impressed us as the words of almost no

other man. What did it mean? They were uttered in the power of the Holy Ghost. The last public words that Mr. Moody ever spoke in the Bible Institute, were about this experience, and the possibility of every Christian having it, and our responsibility to have it.

6. The sixth lesson from Mr. Moody's life is the power of the Bible when fully believed, patiently studied and faithfully preached. What an unanswerable demonstration of the power of the Bible there was in the life, and in the death too, of Mr. Moody!

We see demonstrated in him what power there is in the Bible to draw men. There are those who fancy that one must take up topics and truth outside the Bible if he is to draw and hold the crowds. I hear it constantly said, "If you are going to draw and hold the masses, you must give them something beside the hackneyed truth; you must give them something fresh and new." But who else in our day has drawn and held such crowds to the very last as has Mr. Moody. And these crowds were composed of all classes; rich and poor, scholars, men of science, statesmen, noblemen, students, uneducated men and women, thieves, harlots, murderers, criminals of all sorts, absolutely all statesmen, classes, and what had he to give them? absolutely nothing but the Bible. Nothing else draws like that.

But we see demonstrated in him not only the power of the Bible to draw men, but something higher far; the power of the Bible to save men. He not only drew vast audiences to hear, but thousands, ten of thousands, hundreds of thousands have gone away from hearing him saved. Saved by the power of this book. Some wise, advanced, philosophical, and very self-sufficient preachers have laughed at Mr. Moody's narrowness and his medievalism; but let them point to results one hundredth part as beneficent as those that accompanied his "narrow and antiquated preaching," or else keep still, unless they are desirous of making themselves the laughing stock of all men of sense.

The Word of God had such power in Mr. Moody's hands, first, because he thoroughly believed it from end to end. The time other men spent in picking it to pieces, he spent in feeding upon it. The difference between Mr. Moody and many a college and seminary bred preacher, is the difference between the man who eats a good dinner and the man who criticises it, and tries to display his knowledge of cookery.

(1) He not only believed the Bible; he studied it. There are many who believe theoretically that the Bible is the Word of God, but they do not dig into it. Mr. Moody did. It has been said that Mr. Moody was not a student, but he was a student, a student of one book, and that book more worthy of study than all oth-

er books put together—the Bible. If he had not been a student of the Bible he never would have become what he was.

(2) But he not only believed the Bible and studied the Bible, he preached it in season and out of season, on all possible occasions, to large crowds and to a single hearer. He was ever pouring forth Bible truth.

7. The seventh lesson from his life is the power of prayer. Mr. Moody believed in a God who answers prayer; and his life was a constant demonstration that his faith was true. It was prayer that made the obscure man noted.

After the Chicago fire he went to London to rest, and to learn from the Bible scholars there. He had no intention of preaching. One Sunday morning he was persuaded to preach in a church in London. Everything about the service dragged. He wished that he had never consented to preach. There was a woman in the city who had heard of Mr. Moody's work in America, and had been asking God to send him to London. This woman was an invalid. Her sister was present at the church that Sunday morning. When this hearer reached home she asked her sister to guess who had spoken for them that morning. She made one guess after another of those with whom her pastor was in the habit of exchanging, and then gave it up. Her sister said "No, Mr. Moody from Chicago." The sick woman turned pale and said "This is an answer to my prayer. If I had known that he was to be at our church, I should have eaten nothing this morning, but waited on God in prayer. Leave me alone this afternoon; do not let any one come to see me; do not send me anything to eat." All that afternoon this woman gave herself to prayer. As Mr. Moody preached that night, he soon became conscious that there was a different atmosphere in the church. "The powers of an unseen world seemed to fall" upon him and his hearers. As he drew to a close he felt impressed to give out an invitation. He asked for all who would accept Christ to rise. Four or five hundred people rose. He thought it must be that they misunderstood him, and put the question several ways that there might be no mistake. But no, they had understood. He then asked them to go to an adjoining room. As they passed out, he asked the pastor of the church who these people were. He replied: "I do not know." "Are they your people?" "Some of them." "Are they Christians?" "I do not think so." In that adjoining room he put the question very strongly, but still there were just as many who rose. He told them to meet their pastor the next night. Next day he left for Dublin, but no sooner had he reached there than he received a telegram from the pastor saying that he must return and help him, as a great revival had broken out and there were more out the second night than the first. Hundreds were added to the church at the time.

That was the beginning of his work as an international evangelist.

Few men have had so many people praying for them, and to that fact much of his success was due. Many are saying, "We shall never have another Moody"; but we shall, in everything that is essential, if as many people take to praying as earnestly for some other man. The great Scotch, Irish and English revivals under Mr. Moody in 1873, 1874, and 1875, were due more to the remarkable praying to which he moved men than to the remarkable preaching which he did himself.

It was by prayer he overcame difficulties. When great and apparently unsurmountable difficulties rose in any path he was pursuing, how often he would say, "Let us take this to God in prayer." Then how easily he led us all into God's very presence and with what mighty power of simplicity and faith he took hold upon God. Then the difficulty was overcome. Only last summer great obstacles rose to projects that were dear to him and me. One day he drove up to my house and said, "I want you to ride with me." As we rode up "Lover's Retreat," we talked all these things over, and when we reached a quiet spot he laid down the lines and said, "now pray." After that he led in prayer—just took hold of God in prayer in that way he had, and that settled the difficulty. The work has gone on all right. Thus he overcame obstacles by an appeal to Him to whom "nothing is too hard."

By prayer he got money for the Lord's work. Some people have an idea that Mr. Moody "hustled" for money, and so he did; but his dependence was upon God, and prayer. God heard him. During the World's Fair he said one day as the inner council of workers sat down to dinner, "We need \$7,000.00 for the work today, \$1,000.00 has come in; I do not know where the other \$6,000.00 is to come from, but we must have it, let I us pray for it before we eat." In simple trust in God he took the matter to Him in prayer. We were long at the table discussing the work. Before the dinner was over, there came a knock at the door, a telegram was handed to Mr. Moody which he opened and read, and then passed on to me to read to the group. It read something like this: "D. L. Moody: your friends have taken up at the close of this morning's session an offering for your work in Chicago. \$6,000 has been subscribed, more to follow.

"H. M. MOORE."

Mr. Moore has since told me that as that morning session drew to a close, Dr. Gordon, who was presiding, said to him, "I have a feeling that Mr. Moody needs money for his work in Chicago, what do you think of taking up a collection?" He agreed, with the result mentioned. That opportune feeling must have come to Dr. Gordon about the time that we knelt in prayer in Chicago.



One day last summer Mr. Moody found to his surprise that \$20,000 was needed at once for the schools in Northfield and Chicago. He told no one about it, but went alone with God and prayed, "Send me this \$20,000, and send it in such a way that I will know that it comes from Thee." The manner of its coming was so manifestly from God that no person with any spiritual perception could doubt for a moment who sent it. Mr. Moody has received several millions of dollars for one form of Christian work and another, and all in answer to prayer.

8. The eighth lesson from Mr. Moody's life is the power of faith. Mr. Moody believed that there was nothing too hard for the Lord; that the Lord could and would do great things, even with him, and God did not disappoint him. He never disappoints one whose faith is really in Him and not in himself. Mr. Moody's faith was daring, but the realization fully met the faith.

9. The ninth lesson is the power of humility. He loved to quote some one's saying, "Faith gets the most, love works the most, and humility keeps the most." His own life was a commentary upon these words. He got much by faith, he kept it by humility. It would have been so easy for one rising by such marvellous strides from utter obscurity to worldwide renown to become puffed up, but he never yielded to this temptation. When I first became acquainted with him twenty-one years ago, nothing so much impressed me as his humility. He constantly put himself in the background and put others forward. So it was to the end. He refused again and again to speak at Northfield, because he wished to sit as a learner at the feet of two young men thirty-three years old. He was constantly expecting to learn from other people.

He would not allow his photograph to be publicly sold, thinking that all this picture business ministered to vanity, as it doubtless does. When he held his last meetings in this city, I noticed that a student had Mr. Moody's pictures exposed for sale. I knew he would not like it and went and told him. "What!" he said excitedly, "go get them away at once."

He hated all that smacked of boasting. I once spoke of my health. He stopped me at once and said very earnestly, "Don't boast, don't boast, I never knew anything but evil to come of it."

How many men whom God has led out and greatly used in America have become puffed up, and God has had to lay them aside; but Mr. Moody was never laid aside. God used him to the end. Mr. Moody kept low, and the last four hours of his life were the mightiest and most glorious of all. The very gates of Heaven opened so wide for him to enter, that we too got glimpses of the beyond, as he passed in.

10. The tenth lesson is the power of a wholly surrendered life. Mr. Moody was wholly given up to God. I do not mean that he was a perfect man. He was not. I have never met a perfect man, nor do I expect to until I see the Christ. But while he was not perfect, he was wholly God's. Once when we were talking upon a subject upon which we differed widely, he said, "Why, Torrey, if I thought that God told me to jump out that window, I would jump right out of it at once." I believe he would. He once said, "It yet remains to be seen what God will do with a man wholly given up to Him." I doubt if it altogether remains to be seen. I think we can see very much of it in Mr. Moody himself.

11. The eleventh lesson from the life and death of Mr. Moody is the reality and nearness of the world beyond the grave. About four hours before his final failing asleep, Mr. Moody passed within the gates, and then came back and spoke a little of what he had seen. He said: "Earth is receding; Heaven is opening; God is calling." Later he added, "I have been within the gates; I have seen the children's faces." Others have had similar experiences. Stephen had. Before he fell asleep he cried, "Behold! I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Paul also had, when he was "caught up even to the third heaven," (perhaps when he was drawn out as dead at Lystra) and "heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Gilbert Tennant also had, who seemed to die and then came back and said he had seen things "not lawful to utter." The veil between this world and the other is not so very thick after all.

12. The last lesson is the power of faith in God, in Christ, and in the Bible, to banish all fear of death, and to transform sorrow into rejoicing and triumph.

For four hours Mr. Moody faced death without a tremor. Nay, he rejoiced in it and welcomed it. Standing midway in the stream he said, "No pain, no valley! Is this death? It is not bad. It is sweet. It is bliss." Later he said, "This is glorious. This is my coronation day, I have long looked forward to it." Later still, "Don't call me back; God is calling."

It is the testimony of those who were privileged to stand around that bed, that his last four hours took all the sting and terror out of death, and that the room was transformed from the place of mourning to the chamber of triumph. As his son Will knelt by his side as he sank, he could not find it in his heart to call him back. He afterward said to me, "I did call him back once, but I could not find it in my heart to do it again."

And triumphant too, was the scene as we sat two hours by that open casket in which that beloved form reposed, and then lowered it into the grave. O,

blessed gospel that conquers the last great enemy—death. There is no longer any enemy left to fear.

How different from the sad scene last summer when wife and daughter sat day by day in mute despair by the body of the great agnostic. What a demonstration of the utter emptiness of scepticism, and the all-sufficiency of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Shall we not believe in that old book as we never have believed in it before; study it as we have never studied it before; believe in the Holy Ghost as we have never believed in Him before. Shall we not pray as we have never prayed before, and take up the work that Mr. Moody has laid down, claiming the power that he claimed, and working with every ounce of strength that God gives us, until our summons too shall come. God is saying to us as He said to Israel when Moses died: “Moody MY servant is dead; now therefore arise, go into the land which I do give thee. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moody so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”—Josh. i. 1-9.